

ANGLIA RUSKIN UNIVERSITY

FACULTY OF ARTS, LAW AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

**REACTION AND RENEWAL – LABOUR’S ‘BROAD CHURCH’ IN THE CONTEXT OF THE
BREAKAWAY OF THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC PARTY 1979-1988**

PAUL BLOOMFIELD

**A thesis in partial fulfilment of the requirements of Anglia Ruskin University for the
degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

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ANGLIA RUSKIN UNIVERSITY

ABSTRACT

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DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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This thesis examines how a moment in the Labour Party’s history was to lead to a protracted, yet inevitable, political transformation. It is a history of the events which led to up to the eventual breakaway of moderate members to form the Social Democratic Party in 1981, the reaction to its formation within Labour and its context in the party’s post-war Labour History. The aim is to demonstrate that the formation of the SDP was to influence the development of the Labour Party’s political thought in the 1980s and how consequently this shaped its development up until the present day. The thesis also argues that Labour’s transformation in the 1980s was undertaken despite, not because of, the founding of the SDP and that the continued electoral success of the Conservatives and the implementation of Thatcherism was to ensure Labour had to reassess what its purpose was.

The culmination of the breakaway of the SDP and the aftermath of a third consecutive general election defeat was to eventually lead to the Labour Party’s Policy Review that commenced in 1987. Labour was to go from an existential crisis at the beginning of the 1980s and finish it with a restated confirmation of its purpose that was essentially an assertion of a modified revisionism. Repeated and humiliating defeat was to accelerate Labour’s gravitation to the political centre and an affirmation of a commitment to an economic model less wedded to the philosophy of nationalisation, acceptance of membership of the European Economic Community after years of hostility and the decision to adopt a defence policy that encompassed multilateralism. Labour was to survive the defections of the SDP and to evolve into a party that was to encompass the ideals of an updated revisionism. The defections may have sparked the catalyst for change within Labour but the transformation was undertaken despite of not because of the SDP’S creation. Repeated defeat to an increasingly strident and dominant Conservative Party was to ensure Labour assessed what its purpose was. It also examines the social liberalism of the Labour Party during this period, provides an examination

of the background of the Labour's social democrats, their ideals and what differences there were between them and the so-called traditional right. It also provides analysis of the reactions to the defeat in 1979 and reaction of the remaining members of the Labour right and similarly those on the left and the impact the formation of this new political entity influenced its political ideas and practices in the early 1980s and throughout the decade and beyond. This thesis examines how Labour undertook the forward march from crisis in 1981 to renewal in 1988 and how the broad church of those social democrats who remained, soft leftists and eventually disillusioned far leftists coalesced and guided the party to a reformist, revisionist path.

This thesis is relevant to Labour today as it again attempts to provide a sense of its aims and values in a time of political flux and a Labour Party that has a left-wing leader, buttressed by a growing and energised membership but faced with a centrist parliamentary party. What lessons could the travails of the 1980s offer to the current Labour Party in the age of populism and Brexit?

Key Words: Labour, Social Democrat, revisionism, social liberalism, socialism, ideology

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Reaction and Renewal – Labour’s ‘Broad Church’ in the context of the breakaway of the Social Democratic Party 1979-1987

Introduction

There is a further difficulty that no single constant and consistent body of socialist doctrine exists. R.H. Tawney has written that ‘like other summary designations of complex political forces, Socialism is a word the connotation of which varies, not only from generation to generation, but from decade to decade’. And not only has the doctrine varied through time, but different versions of it, as will be seen, are mutually consistent. In the case of the British Labour Party, matters are additionally complicated by the fact that it was not found on any body of doctrine at all, and has always preserved a marked anti-doctrinal and anti-theoretical basis.

Tony Crosland¹

Research Questions

This thesis examines how a moment in the Labour Party’s history was to lead to a protracted, yet inevitable, political transformation. Focusing on the breakaway of moderate members and the formation of the Social Democratic Party (SDP) in 1981, it explores the reaction within Labour and its context in the party’s post-war history. The aim is to demonstrate that the formation of the SDP was to influence the development of the Labour Party’s political thought in the 1980s and has consequently shaped its development up until the present day.

The breakaway of the SDP and a third consecutive general election defeat in 1987 was to eventually lead to the Labour Party’s Policy Review that commenced in 1987. Labour started

¹ Anthony Crosland, *The Future of Socialism*, (London: Constable, 2006), p.52

the 1980s with an existential crisis and finished the decade by redefining its purpose through an assertion of a revisionism that had its roots in the 1950s. Repeated and humiliating defeat accelerated Labour's gravitation to the political centre and an affirmation of a commitment to an economic model less wedded to the philosophy of nationalisation. It accepted membership of the European Economic Community after years of hostility and adopted a defence policy that encompassed multilateralism.

Yet how did Labour get to this point of requiring a Policy Review? Why did some leave Labour and some stay? Why were those who stayed such as Denis Healey, Roy Hattersley and Giles Radice more comfortable with the character of the Labour party than those who left yet with whom they shared common ideological opinions? Why was Labour's right wing surprisingly resilient in the face of a dual onslaught from both the Labour left led by Tony Benn and the newly formed SDP?

This thesis provides analysis of the reactions to the defeat in 1979 and reaction of the remaining members of the Labour right, and similarly those on the left and the impact the formation of this new political entity influenced its political ideas and practices in the early 1980s and throughout the decade. It also highlights that, despite the uncertainty that many felt within the Labour right that they could continue as members of the party, they were to prove effective in re-establishing their influence within the party and stemming further defections. From being demoralised and divided in the late 1970s, Labour's revisionists were to be much more vocal and confident by the end of the 1980s.

An integral part of revisionism was a commitment to social liberalism of the form that had been championed by Crosland and Roy Jenkins in the 1950s. This thesis examines the background of the Labour's social democrats and shows how the pursuit of social liberalism which had flourished in the 1950s and 1960s was maintained in the 1980s. That this happened at a time

when it would have been politically expedient to drop such policies was to underline Labour's broader commitment to equality and personal freedom.

The defections to the SDP may have been the catalyst for change within Labour. This thesis argues that the transformation was undertaken despite, not because of, the SDP's creation. Thatcherism's electoral success was to ensure Labour had to reassess its purpose. This study examines how Labour undertook the difficult transition from the deep divisions that led to the defections in 1981 to the Policy Review in 1987 and how the broad church of those who remained (democratic socialists/social democrats, soft leftists and in some cases a number of disillusioned far leftists) coalesced and guided the party to a reformist, revisionist path.

This thesis is relevant to Labour today as it again attempts to provide a sense of its aims and values in a time of political flux and a Labour Party that has a left-wing leader, buttressed by a growing and energised membership but faced with a centrist parliamentary party. What lessons could the travails of the 1980s offer to the current Labour Party in the age of populism and Brexit?

Methodology

This study has used the archives of Labour and SDP figures to understand the motivations of politicians in the 1980s. It draws upon the methods of Labour history with its attention to issues such as movement cultures and political strategy. The approach to the research is to provide a new perspective on the events of the late 1970s and 1980s by means of interviews with some of the witnesses and in some cases main actors of the period as well as the utilisation of relevant archive material.

There is a need to examine the history of the breakaway of the Social Democratic Party almost thirty years after events in order to detail how the revisionists eventually reasserted their influence within the Labour Party in the latter part of the 1980s. To assist with this, the Neil

Kinnock papers held at the Churchill College Archives have been examined. The papers of Lord Kinnock have not been used extensively previously, with Martin Pugh's *Speak for Britain!*² and the chapters written for collection *Labour and the Left in the 1980s* by Jonathan Davis and Richard Carr being the exceptions.³ These archives were indexed and collated only relatively recently and their contents provide a strong source of primary source materials relating to the events of the 1980s, particularly in relation to the leadership elections which took place, campaign events and the Policy Review. The examination and utilisation of these papers within the thesis are a contribution to original research.

The archival papers of David Owen which are held at the University of Liverpool's Special Collections and Archives Centre were examined during the course of the research. These papers provided an insight into one of the leading members of the 'Gang of Four'.

The papers at the People's History Museum for the following Labour Party members were examined: former Labour Leader Michael Foot; the Secretary of the Manifesto Group George Robertson, later to be Defence Secretary under Tony Blair before his appointment as Secretary-General of NATO; former General Secretary of the Fabian Society and Labour Party Chair Dianne Hayter; and the former MP for Liverpool Walton, Minister for Industry under Harold Wilson and deputy leadership challenger Eric Heffer. An examination of archive materials of leading Labour Party members and organisations such as the Manifesto Group, the Campaign for Labour Victory and Labour Solidarity has been undertaken to help provide additional perspective on the events of the time.

In order to provide a different and original perspective on the events being researched, a series of interviews with from those who were witness to events were undertaken over a period of five years. The list of interviewees includes leading figures from the Labour Party from the

² Martin Pugh, *Speak for Britain! A New History of the Labour Party* (London: Vintage, 2011)

³ Jonathan Davis and Rohan McWilliam (Eds.), *Labour and the Left in the 1980s* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2017)

period including the former Labour leader Neil Kinnock; former Socialist Campaign Group member and Secretary of State for Health Frank Dobson MP; Austin Mitchell, MP for Anthony Crosland's old seat of Great Grimsby and a member of the Manifesto and Labour Solidarity groups; Dianne Hayter, former General Secretary of the Fabian Society and Chair of the Labour Party; Giles Radice, MP for North Durham Chester-Le-Street, co-organiser of Labour Solidarity and shadow Education Secretary under Neil Kinnock; Clive Soley, MP for Hammersmith North (later Ealing, Acton and Shepherd's Bush) and later to become Chair of the Labour Party under Tony Blair; Joyce Gould, assistant to the National Agent for the Labour Party under Harold Wilson and James Callaghan and former Director of Organisation under Neil Kinnock; and Bryan Davies, former Secretary to the Parliamentary Labour Party and Shadow Cabinet and MP for Oldham Central and Royton. These interviews are of great importance as this is the first time that these key individuals have spoken about this issue in this way. Incorporating their recent reflections on the split and what happened afterwards will add much to our understanding of the Labour Party at this time. In addition to this will be the data obtained from interviewing members of three different Constituency Labour Parties who were activists at the time of the events in the thesis. The interviews took place in Cambridge, Bury St Edmunds and Oldham, thus encompassing a range of perspectives from the suburban, urban industrial and rural areas of Labour's support. As mentioned earlier also, as the events took place over thirty five years ago it was necessary to obtain interviews from some of those present before the opportunity was lost.

There were attempts to arrange interviews with some members of Parliament for whom initial agreement had been obtained but did not materialise further. These included Dame Margaret Beckett, Lord George Foulkes, Lord Tom McNally, Lord Bernard Donoghue and Sir Gerald Kaufman. Requests to Lord Roy Hattersley to arrange an interview were declined whilst those who kindly replied but declined the opportunity to participate included Tony Blair, Hilary Benn

and Roy Mason. Those who did not reply to requests for interviews included Dennis Skinner, Jeremy Corbyn, George Robertson and Gordon Brown.

The importance of oral history is that it helps to add an extra dimension to what has been written or what is believed to be already known. Interviews with both active participants and observers who were involved in Labour politics at the time help to chronicle the reactions and reasoning of those who chose to stay rather than those who departed, something that helps to provide a new perspective on a period of history that has been otherwise examined quite widely. In *By Word of Mouth*, the standard book on the practice and nature of elite oral history, Anthony Seldon and Joanna Pappworth note the advantages and drawbacks that arise in the process of undertaking interviews. The advantages, according to the authors, are that it helps to draw out facts that may not be already available in published texts,⁴ understand personalities better, how people reacted to events, about 'how relationships function in practice'⁵, and in the case of political science helps to understand the policy-making process.⁶ Seldon and Pappworth also contend that the 'giving of broad perspective' is advantageous in that just as 'an individual made a particular contribution over a number of years, so too can they provide information on what issues were regarded important over a number of years'.⁷ Whilst evidence may well be partial in such cases, Seldon and Pappworth assert that it is 'no less important to hear the interpretations and assessments of those who witness or participated in events, if only as a point of departure'.⁸ Atmosphere and colour are also advantageous to Seldon and Pappworth in that they help to understand how people reacted in the way that they did as well, and the interview process helps to provide insight into a subject's personality and thought processes.⁹ Oral history also enables the contributions of the 'non-elite' to be heard when it may otherwise remain silent: 'the contribution of history of

⁴ Anthony Seldon and Joanna Pappworth, *By Word of Mouth: Elite Oral History* (London: Methuen and Co., 1983), p.37

⁵ Seldon and Pappworth, *By Word of Mouth*, pp.37-38

⁶ Seldon and Pappworth, *By Word of Mouth*, p.42

⁷ Seldon and Pappworth, *By Word of Mouth*, p.43

⁸ Seldon and Pappworth, *By Word of Mouth*, p.43

⁹ Seldon and Pappworth, *By Word of Mouth*, pp.48-49

personal evidence will be confined to just those few whose subjective views and thoughts were anyway likely to be well recorded in the written documentation'.¹⁰ This was a particular reason for wanting to call upon the recollections and experiences of those activists whose observations of the events at the time not only provided a different perspective but a valuable contribution to local Labour Party histories.

The obvious drawbacks to interviews, as noted by Seldon and Pappworth, are that, firstly, the problem of an interviewee's inadequate memory may inhibit their recollection of events.¹¹ On occasions, some of the interviewees have used diary entries in order to assist with their recollections but where there may be gaps attempts have been undertaken to complete any omissions or unintentional errors.

Secondly, an interviewee may be unfairly vindictive, lack perspective or show a distortion of events due to their own personal feelings.¹² John Tosh makes a similar observation, noting that 'his or her memories, however precise, are filtered through subsequent experience. They may be contaminated by what has been absorbed from other sources (especially the media)'.¹³ In politics this may not be seen to be surprising and due to the events being discussed in the thesis even less so and a person's sometimes visceral reaction can help to provide understanding of the strength of feeling felt at the time (underlined by the fact that such sentiments still exist many years later).

For Seldon and Pappworth there is the danger of an interview containing superficial information or gossip, or an interviewee relying on the benefit of hindsight.¹⁴ The transcripts of the interviews contributed for this study have been slightly abridged in order to take out extraneous details (small-talk, for example). Information which has been deemed pertinent to

¹⁰ Seldon and Pappworth, *By Word of Mouth*, p.50

¹¹ Seldon and Pappworth, *By Word of Mouth*, p.17

¹² Seldon and Pappworth, *By Word of Mouth*, pp.19-24

¹³ John Tosh, *The Pursuit of History: Aims, methods and new directions in the study of history (Sixth Edition)* (Oxford: Routledge, 2015), p.269

¹⁴ Tosh, *The Pursuit of History*, p.25

the thesis has been included but the transcripts of the interviews are provided in the appendix and audio recordings are available.

Finally, there is the potential for the interviewer to undertake an unrepresentative sample of subjects, to be biased in their questioning or showing undue deference in towards an interviewee and to misrepresent what an interviewee said.¹⁵ In terms of a representative sample, attempts have been made to provide a cross-section of Labour Party membership and opinion in order to ensure that the contributions are too far tilted in one particular direction. Whilst the interviews have been taken in an atmosphere of respect, attempts have been made to allow the interviewees to make their own contributions which may have required the occasional guiding prompt, but without the aid of leading questions.

Secondary source material in the shape of articles and clippings taken from the archives of *the Guardian and Observer*, *The Times*, *the Daily Mirror*, *the Daily Express*, and also publications such as *Marxism Today*, *New Statesman*, *Political Quarterly*, *Socialist Review* and *Socialist Register* have been examined for both contemporaneous and reflective accounts of the period. This has been examined and added in order to provide context to events and to cross check information in archival material and interviews.

Literature Review

Secondary literature on Labour and the SDP in the 1980s remains surprisingly limited. What follows is an examination of some of the more notable texts that are available on the era of the breakaway of the Social Democrats and its aftermath and those which examine the nature of social democracy. The biographies of the leading politicians of the period are excellent sources of information and in the case of some, such as Roy Hattersley and Denis Healey they offer strong defences of their actions and the positions taken, whereas Giles Radice's

¹⁵ Tosh, *The Pursuit of History*, pp.27-32

account of Anthony Crosland, Healey and Roy Jenkins plus David Marquand's pen essays on progressive politicians observe the evolution of the Labour Party up to and including the split and the creation of New Labour. Yet these texts whilst not in need of significant revision were written some time ago, either before or during the period of the New Labour governments of 1997-2010. Therefore this thesis provides a reassessment of a period which for the most part has not been updated for some time.

The first book about the SDP was provided by the *The Times* journalist Ian Bradley with *Breaking the Mould? The Birth and Prospects of the Social Democratic Party*. Bradley contends that the roots of the breakaway were sown as far back as 1960 with the creation of the Gaitskellite Campaign for Democratic Socialism (CDS) and the internecine battles over Europe. He chronicles how in the mid-1970s right-wing Labour MPs were being de-selected and their unsuccessful appeals to the ruling NEC led to the formation of the Campaign for Labour Victory (CLV) in 1977, an organisation similar to the CDS and augmenting the previously created Manifesto Group, with Bill Rodgers as the main organising force and David Owen as a supporter¹⁶ Bradley also observes how the CLV's organiser, Alec McGivan, felt that the organisation was 'a springboard for the launch of a new party,' and that leading right-wingers such as Denis Healey and Peter Shore declined to commit themselves and that Roy Hattersley expressed concern at backing a sectional group within the party.¹⁷ There was increasing dissent on the right of the Labour Party emerged around the 1979 General Election. Former Labour MP David Marquand openly questioned whether Labour was capable of delivering on the aims of 'traditional welfare-state social democracy'.¹⁸ Dissent was also expressed by members of the right-wing Social Democratic Association (SDA). Bradley's book provides a chronological yet still informative history of the events alongside a pen history of the main protagonists Jenkins, Owen, Rodgers and Williams, including the class and

¹⁶ Ian Bradley, *Breaking the Mould?: Birth and Prospects of the Social Democratic Party*, (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 1981), pp.59-62

¹⁷ Bradley, *Breaking the Mould*, p.63

¹⁸ Quoted in Bradley, *Breaking the Mould*, p.66

educational backgrounds of the defecting MPs. Similarly, Bradley provides an analysis of what the SDP's ideology was, establishing that there was a tension between those who were attracted to the idea of Jenkins' 'radical centre' and those who wanted a 'Mark II Labour Party, a tension between the working class, socially conservative grouping as epitomised by the SDA and the more progressively liberal that saw Jenkins as their leader. For Bradley it was 'a slight disappointment' that the SDP's clearest policy commitments of all are to those now rather old and distinctly unradical institutions, the EEC and NATO,' noting that this brought over the same policy commitments that those who had defected had held whilst in Labour.¹⁹ Bradley is clear that political theory was important for the SDP. He explores David Owen and Shirley Williams's discussion of socialism as the pursuit of equality and the eschewing of nationalisation and monetarism. He also includes David Marquand and Evan Luard's call for the reduction of state power in order to promote equality. Yet at the same time, Bradley offers this conclusion: 'social democracy, then is less an ideology and more a particular approach to dealing with society and its problems'.²⁰ This summary could also be used to describe Neil Kinnock and Roy Hattersley's approach to socialism also as will be seen later in the thesis.

Bradley also makes the claim that Jenkins had 'some claims to being regarded as the founder of the SDP,' noting that many of the current or former MPs were formerly Gaitskellites and then Jenkinsites,²¹ although this claim would be strongly contested by the three other members of the 'Gang of Four'. In his narrative, Bradley reports on the tensions on the possibility of an alliance with the Liberals, saying that of the four Jenkins was the most inclined and Owen the least, with Rodgers and Williams lukewarm at the prospect.²² Bradley provides a detailed account of the early incarnation of the SDP utilising contemporary polling data and offers the suggestion towards the end that tempers the optimism some felt that the SDP and Liberals could win, proposing that the best hope for the nascent Alliance would be a hung

¹⁹ Bradley, *Breaking the Mould*, p.124

²⁰ Bradley, *Breaking the Mould*, p.137

²¹ Bradley, *Breaking the Mould*, p.101

²² Bradley, *Breaking the Mould*, p.119

parliament and support for the Conservatives in return for support for the introduction of Proportional Representation.²³

Bradley's was not the only account at the time. Hugh Robertson's *Claret and Chips* is another short yet detailed contemporary report of the SDP's breakaway and takes events up to the election of Roy Jenkins at the Glasgow Hillhead by-election.²⁴ Like Bradley, Stephenson was a journalist for *the Times* and at the time of the publication was editor of the *New Statesman*. Stephenson reflects that there was nothing necessarily radical about the SDP's ideology observing that 'their instincts about particular policies had a slightly old-fashioned and Fabian tendency' and that they 'were united in disliking the radical and sometimes anti-parliamentarian attitudes emerging on the Labour Party'.²⁵ Like Bradley's book, it explores the genesis of the split from Labour although it spends less time on ideology. Instead, it deals with the problems that came with dealing with the Liberals and accommodating their traditions and structures. It also includes the observation that, whilst Shirley Williams was of the Social Democratic tradition, she was not as socially liberal in all aspects of policy as Roy Jenkins, with Stephenson noting Williams being 'able to attack confidently on the matter of abortion' during the Crosby by-election of 26 November 1981 and that she had 'opposed and voted against the 1967 Abortion Act, sponsored by David Steel', something which would have played well with the 'up to 20,000 Catholic votes'. Stephenson's book also includes the Bermondsey by-election which is examined in detail in this thesis but he claims Peter Tatchell was a member of the Militant Tendency when he was not.²⁶

The books were essentially works of journalism. Far more scholarly is *SDP: The Birth, Life, and Death of the Social Democratic Party* by Ivor Crewe and Anthony King.²⁷ This is the

²³ Bradley, *Breaking the Mould*, p.159

²⁴ Hugh Stephenson, *Claret and Chips: Rise of the S.D.P.* (London: Michael Joseph Ltd, 1982)

²⁵ Stephenson, *Claret and Chips: Rise of the S.D.P.*, p.8

²⁶ Stephenson, *Claret and Chips: Rise of the S.D.P.*, p.152

²⁷ Crewe and King, *SDP: The Birth, Life, and Death of the Social Democratic Party* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995)

standard history of the party, written by two leading political scientists. Crewe and King argue that it was the period of the Wilson, Heath and Callaghan Governments that saw the failure of the post-war consensus. The widening of the ideological gap in the mid-1970s between Margaret Thatcher's Conservatives and a Labour Party whose left-wing had been strengthening since the defeat of Wilson's administration in 1970 provided the breeding ground for the SDP. Added to this was the sense that the right of the Labour Party was lacking leadership and inspiration and had effect been in retreat since 1970; the revisionist ideals identified with Tony Crosland were exhausted.

As a critical history, Crewe's and King's book observes how the party conferences and, in particular, the 1980 Special Conference at Wembley were to have an effect on the then 'Gang of Three', Bill Rodgers, Shirley Williams and David Owen, soon to be four with the intervention of Roy Jenkins. Crewe and King devote a chapter to Jenkins and his supporters and how his Dimpleby Lecture of November 22nd 1979 was received warmly by David Steel of the Liberals while the reception was more mixed from the 'Gang of Three'. The book provides an analysis of the leadership battle between Denis Healey and Michael Foot and, via anonymous interviews, the revelation that some MPs who were later to join the SDP voted for Foot in order to exacerbate the split. Crewe and King also provide a more sober judgement in contrast to those who believed that a Healey victory would have propelled Labour to victory in 1983, suggesting that Healey would not have been successful (being similar to Callaghan) and therefore would have only delayed the defections; the defeats of 1983 and 1987 would still have occurred.²⁸ Crewe and King state that, as a consequence, only a leader from the left was capable of leading Labour in the early 1980s.²⁹ The book also provides an examination of those who defected and those who remained within the Labour Party and also of the Conservatives (and why only Christopher Brocklebank-Fowler was the only Tory MP to cross

²⁸ Crewe and King, *SDP: The Birth, Life, and Death of the Social Democratic Party*, pp.73-75 and pp.468

²⁹ See also Martin Farr, 'Leading the Labour Party in the 1980s' in Davis and McWilliam, *Labour and the Left in the 1980s*

the floor of the House of Commons). One of the findings Crewe and King came to was that 'what the Labour party lost was not a group or even a splinter group but a number of tiny fragments,' which is correct in that those who defected may have differed by degrees on the issue of Europe or nuclear defence but they were not 'an ideologically distinct group within the Labour right'.³⁰ Yet what did unite them was the feeling that control of the party was irretrievably in the hands of the left and that those who defected were accused of not remaining to help fight and reverse this. Crewe and King noted the MP Ken Weetch saying, 'When I was his PPS, Bill Rodgers used to tell me to play Labour politics long; I followed his advice even if he didn't'.³¹ This sentiment is something which continues to be evident thirty five years later as evidenced by some of the interviews taken place. Furthermore, there was the accusation put forward by those who remained that those who 'broke from Labour had not been all that tightly bound to it in the first place'.³² As will be seen by comments by Dianne Hayter, Neil Kinnock and Frank Dobson, this was certainly a sentiment that was felt by some from different sections of the party. Crewe and King observe for some such as Roy Mason and Roy Hattersley, 'emotional attachments to the Labour party were simply too strong for them to contemplate leaving,' although this thesis also notes that for those such as Giles Radice his original reasons for joining was philosophical, and that he had developed a bond with the party despite not coming from a Labour background himself.³³

Finally, Crewe and King conclude the first part of the book with an analysis of the ideology of the SDP (noting how Rodgers stated that the party was 'very plainly, a left of centre party'),³⁴ culminating in the Warrington, Crosby and Glasgow Hillhead by-elections, the latter two of which were to see the return to Parliament of Shirley Williams and Roy Jenkins.

³⁰ Crewe and King, SDP: *The Birth, Life, and Death of the Social Democratic Party*, pp.105-115

³¹ Crewe and King, SDP: *The Birth, Life, and Death of the Social Democratic Party*, p.108

³² Crewe and King, SDP: *The Birth, Life, and Death of the Social Democratic Party*, p.114

³³ Crewe and King, SDP: *The Birth, Life, and Death of the Social Democratic Party*, p.107

³⁴ Crewe and King, SDP: *The Birth, Life, and Death of the Social Democratic Party*, pp.73-75 and p.102

The book concludes with the contention that the very system that prevented the SDP making the electoral breakthrough in 1983, the First Past the Post System, allowed Labour the time to reform itself and that the reform was led by Kinnock of the soft left and not the right of the party. Moreover, Crewe and King suggests that those who founded the SDP 'may rejoice in the fact that the beliefs of the new Labour Party under Tony Blair are far closer to their own beliefs than were the views of either the Conservatives or the Labour Party in the 1970s and 1980s'.³⁵

Towards the end of the century, and only two years into Tony Blair's premiership, the former Labour MP and SDP founder, David Marquand, produced a book of pen essays on major figures from the progressive left entitled *The Progressive Dilemma: From Lloyd George to Blair* which highlighted the philosophical evolution of revisionism. In the chapter, 'Roy Jenkins: The Progressive as Whig', Marquand described his old mentor's ideology in similar terms to those of Bradley and Crewe and King: 'he knew what he was against more precisely what he was for. By instinct, he was for a mixture of pluralistic liberalism and Keynesian social democracy'.³⁶ Marquand also describes how Jenkins was 'appalled by Owen's renunciation of Keynes and flirtations with a sub-Thatcherite political economy'.³⁷ Marquand also argues that Tony Crosland would not have joined the SDP if he had lived and that the party was 'never a Croslandite party...Its purpose – never realised, of course – was to revise the revisionism of the 1950s, not to become a vehicle for it'.³⁸

Finally, Marquand argues that New Labour was a different phenomenon that 'has abandoned not only socialism but social democracy – in any sense that paladins of the social-democratic tradition such as Bevin, Gaitskell or Crosland would have used the term, although he refutes charges of it being Thatcherite: 'Underpinning the individualistic, mobile, competitive society

³⁵ Crewe and King, *SDP: The Birth, Life, and Death of the Social Democratic Party*, p.470

³⁶ David Marquand, *The Progressive Dilemma: From Lloyd George to Blair* (Second Edition, London: Phoenix Giant, 1999), p.193

³⁷ Marquand, *The Progressive Dilemma*, p.193

³⁸ Marquand, *The Progressive Dilemma*, p.170

is a highly interventionist, indeed *dirigiste* workforce state, which would have warmed the cockles of Beatrice Webb's heart'.³⁹ Marquand's contention that New Labour was not social democratic contradicts Radice's belief that Tony Blair's 'rethinking (of) the party's strategy in the light of circumstances was pure revisionism,' and that it followed '...the Croslandite argument for defining socialism in terms of greater equality rather than of nationalisation'.⁴⁰

Similar to the Marquand work is the collection of essays on the relevance of Crosland's revisionism in the age of New Labour edited by the former MP and journalist Dick Leonard, *Crosland and New Labour*⁴¹, as is Patrick Diamond's *New Labour's Old Roots: Revisionist Thinkers in Labour's History 1930-1997*.⁴²

Leonard's book contained essay from contributors within the Labour party such as Gordon Brown and Roy Hattersley, the historian Brian Brivati and the political commentator and polling expert Peter Kellner. The essays unifying theme was to ask what impact and relevance Crosland's philosophy had on New Labour. Coming out in 1999, it was only two years into the Labour Government of Tony Blair but for Hattersley 'had Crosland lived, he would have undoubtedly wanted to reassert the crucial necessity of economic redistribution. As it is, egalitarian socialism died with him'.⁴³ As Hattersley was to attempt to revive Croslandite revisionism during his tenure as deputy leader, the comment could be construed as referring to the end of egalitarian socialism with the advent of enforced monetarism under James Callaghan but also a reference towards New Labour which Hattersley was to become increasingly critical towards.

Patrick Diamond's book *New Labour's Old Roots: Revisionist Thinkers in Labour's History 1930-1997* was published as Diamond was a special adviser to the Prime Minister's Office

³⁹ Marquand, *The Progressive Dilemma*, pp.232-235

⁴⁰ Giles Radice, *Friends and Rivals: Crosland, Jenkins and Healey* (London: Little Brown, 2002), p.335

⁴¹ Dick Leonard, *Crosland and New Labour* (Houndmills: Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 1998)

⁴² Patrick Diamond, *New Labour's Old Roots: Revisionist Thinkers in Labour's History 1930-1997* (Exeter: Imprint Academic, 2004)

⁴³ Dick Leonard, *Crosland and New Labour* (Houndmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 1998), p.66

during the Blair Government (2004) and draws on papers written by R.H. Tawney, Hugh Dalton, Evan Durbin, Tony Crosland, Evan Luard, Roy Hattersley, Giles Radice and Gordon Brown. Each paper focuses on the revisionist area of equality and liberty and Radice's essay in particular is compelling as it is contemporaneous with the Policy Review taking place and calls for a clear revisionist strategy and an end to 'pragmatism, which is at one and the same time complacent, defensive and confused'.⁴⁴

Further excellent sources of Labour history are the works of Keith Laybourn,⁴⁵ Henry Pelling,⁴⁶ Andrew Thorpe⁴⁷, A. J. Davies⁴⁸, Eric Shaw,⁴⁹ the Centennial histories produced and edited by Brian Brivati and Richard Heffernan⁵⁰ and Martin Pugh's *Speak for Britain!*⁵¹, all of which provide overviews and examinations of the developments in the party from its inception

During the reading of the changing social attitudes of the post-war period up to the 1980s, the works of Arthur Marwick⁵² and contemporary social histories by Andy Beckett⁵³ and Alwyn W. Turner⁵⁴ have been utilised, as has the excellent account by Stephen Brooke on the changing nature of sexual politics in British society, *Sexual Politics: Sexuality, Family Planning, and the British Left from the 1880s to the Present Day*.⁵⁵ Two critical histories of the Policy Review

⁴⁴ Giles Radice, *Labour's Path to Power*, in Patrick Diamond, *New Labour's Old Roots: Revisionist Thinkers in Labour's History 1930-1997* (Exeter: Imprint Academic, 2004), p.221

⁴⁵ Keith Laybourn, *A Century of Labour: A History of the Labour Party, 1900-2000* (New edition) (Sparkford: J.H. Haynes & Co, Limited, 2001)

⁴⁶ Henry Pelling, *A Short History of the Labour Party (Eighth Edition)* (Houndmills, Basingstoke: Macmillan Books, 1985)

⁴⁷ Andrew Thorpe, *A History of the British Labour Party (Second Edition)* (Houndmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001)

⁴⁸ A.J. Davies, *To Build A New Jerusalem: The British Labour Party from Keir Hardie to Tony Blair* (London: Abacus, 1996)

⁴⁹ Eric Shaw, *The Labour Party Since 1979: Crisis and Transformation* (Chichester: Routledge, 1994); Eric Shaw, *The Labour Party Since 1945: Old Labour – New Labour (Making Contemporary Britain)* (Chichester: John Wiley and Sons, 1996)

⁵⁰ Brian Brivati, and Richard Heffernan (Editors), *The Labour Party: A Centennial History*, (Houndmills, Basingstoke: Macmillan Press, 2000)

⁵¹ Martin Pugh, *Speak for Britain! A New History of the Labour Party* (London: Vintage, 2011)

⁵² Arthur Marwick, *British Society Since 1945* (London: Penguin, 1990); Arthur Marwick, *The Sixties* (London: Bloomsbury, 2012)

⁵³ Andy Beckett, *Promised You A Miracle* (London: Penguin, 2016)

⁵⁴ Alwyn W. Turner, *A Classless Society: Britain in the 1990s* (London: Aurum Press, 2014); Alwyn W. Turner, *Crisis? What Crisis? Britain in the 1970s* (London: Aurum Press, 2013); Alwyn W. Turner, *Rejoice! Rejoice! Britain in the 1980s* (London: Aurum Press, 2013)

⁵⁵ Stephen Brooke, *Sexual Politics: Sexuality, Family Planning, and the British Left from the 1880s to the Present Day* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2011)

period appeared in the 1990s: Colin Hughes and Patrick Wintour's *Labour Rebuilt: The New Model Party*⁵⁶ is at turns sympathetic to the changes that were being proposed as part of the Policy Review before criticising the process for being a cosmetic exercise for winning electoral support. Gerald R. Taylor, *Labour's Renewal? The Policy Review and Beyond*⁵⁷ attacks the Policy Review from a left-wing perspective and also derides the implantation of changes for the purposes of political expediency.

Labour has also been well served by a number of political science texts which have provided critical perspective, many of which approach their examination of the party's development from a left-wing standpoint. Geoffrey Foote's *The Labour Party's Political Thought: A History* provides an analysis of Labour's development that is highly critical of Labour's revisionist wing in stunting the development of industrial democracy.⁵⁸ David Coates' collection of essays from *Socialist Register, Paving the Third Way: The Critique of Parliamentary Socialism – A Socialist Register Anthology* provides critical chapters on Labourism, the role of socialism in Labour and how, as Coates contends 'the limits of Old Labour paved the way for the limits of New Labour'.⁵⁹⁶⁰ Coates also assisted with the book produced by Leo Pannitch and Colin Leys' in 2001, *The End of Parliamentary Socialism: From New Left to New Labour*, which features a highly critical analysis of the Kinnock years under the chapter *Disempowering Activism*.⁶¹ Leys' seminal work, *Politics in Britain: From Labourism to Thatcherism* observes that the election of Kinnock and Hattersley was based on the promise 'to unite the party on a pragmatic basis and appeal effectively to the social-democratic values which a substantial majority of the electorate still appeared to support'.⁶²

⁵⁶ Colin Hughes and Patrick Wintour, *Labour Rebuilt: The New Model Party* (London: Fourth Estate, 1990)

⁵⁷ Gerald R. Taylor, *Labour's Renewal? The Policy Review and Beyond*, (London: Macmillian Press Ltd, 1997)

⁵⁸ David Coates, *Paving the Third Way: The Critique of Parliamentary Socialism – A Socialist Register Anthology* (London: The Merlin Press Ltd, 2002)

⁵⁹ Coates, *Paving the Third Way*, p.2

⁶⁰ Coates, *Paving the Third Way*, p.2

⁶¹ Colin Leys and Leo Pannitch, *The End of Parliamentary Socialism: From New Left to New Labour* (London: Verso May, 2001)

⁶² Colin Leys, *Politics in Britain: From Labourism to Thatcherism* (Revised Edition) (London: Verso, 1989), p.115

There have been a number of political autobiographies and biographies concerning the protagonists that appear in this thesis. James Callaghan's biographer Kenneth O. Morgan provides a sympathetic though not uncritical account of the difficulties Callaghan faced between 1979 and 1980, writing that Callaghan fought for moderate policy at conference: 'in hopeless circumstances, he did his best to fight, more consistently so than Denis Healey and others on the centre-right, while Owen and others were to jump ship altogether in disillusion or bitterness'.⁶³ Surprisingly, Callaghan's own memoirs do not really touch on this period, with only a three page Postscript in which he states his resentment at accusations of 'betrayal' by the left of the party (the quotation marks are Callaghan's) and how Michael Foot faced a difficult period made all the harder by the defections. Considering his painful experiences leading Labour after 1979, it is perhaps surprising for Callaghan to be so reticent. Callaghan states that 'this is a memoir, not a history, and some things must remain untouched',⁶⁴ and perhaps his wish was to not re-open still relatively fresh and bitter divisions at a time of a general election (as the original publication came out in 1987), but it is surprising that Callaghan did not wish to examine this final period of his leadership in order to provide more of a defence to his critics on both the Left and the Right.

The man that Callaghan strongly wished to succeed him, Denis Healey, produced an entertaining memoir, *The Time of My Life* and his account of the battle inside Labour does not withhold any self-criticism. The chapter, 'Labour in Travail', begins with Healey stating that Callaghan told him he was staying on in order to prepare Healey for the right opportunity to take over, but noted that what happened eventually was 'ten years of internal fighting which was quite as damaging to the Party as the decade of struggle with Bevanism after Attlee lost power'.⁶⁵ Healey provides a strong revisionist defence against the left's accusation that the party lost the election due to the Callaghan Government's lack of socialism, whereas Healey

⁶³ Kenneth O. Morgan, *Callaghan: A Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), p.720

⁶⁴ James Callaghan, *Time and Chance*, (London: Fontana Press, 1988), p.567

⁶⁵ Denis Healey, *The Time of My Life* (London: Penguin Books, 1990), p.466

blames the Winter of Discontent of 1978-79.⁶⁶ Healey recounts the battles of against Tony Benn and the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy (CLPD) and provides an unflattering comparison of Benn to Sir Stafford Cripps, 'also a political ninny of the most superior quality'.⁶⁷

Healey makes the contention that the Commission of Enquiry that was convened at Bishop's Stortford on 15th June 1980 was the beginning of the crystallisation of a breakaway. The Commission of Enquiry voted to approve the submission of a new electoral college for electing the party leadership and also on the matter of the mandatory reselection of MPs. Despite the protestations of both Callaghan and Michael Foot, the motion was carried for submission to the next party conference, and Callaghan and Healey were to face the opprobrium of the 'Gang of Three' for not providing more resistance to the proposals. 'It was Bishop's Stortford which caused the conception of the Social Democratic Party, although its birth took place, appropriately enough, nine months later.'⁶⁸ Healey states that the reason he did not join the Manifesto Group's attack against Bishop's Stortford was because it would have been an attack against Callaghan who was still very popular in the country.

On the leadership battle of 1980, Healey offers the opinion that whilst he believed that most of the MPs that joined the SDP voted for him although he alludes to machinations on the part of certain MPs to engineer a Foot victory to justify their subsequent defection.⁶⁹ Healey also acknowledges that his abrasive style could have also backfired against him.⁷⁰ Yet Healey is more recognisably combative when it came to the Deputy Leadership battle and states that whilst it was not a position he wanted to take, he recognised the importance of having to stand

⁶⁶ See John Shepherd, *Crisis? What Crisis? The Callaghan Government and the Winter of Discontent*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013)

⁶⁷ Shepherd, *Crisis? What Crisis?*, p.466

⁶⁸ Shepherd, *Crisis? What Crisis?*, p.474

⁶⁹ Shepherd, *Crisis? What Crisis?*, p.476

⁷⁰ Shepherd, *Crisis? What Crisis?*, p.476

and also of having to win (Giles Radice was to note in his diary that it was this victory that saved the Labour Party).⁷¹

Kenneth O. Morgan's biography of Foot highlights the leader's speech at the Brighton Conference in which he said that the Labour Party was 'a pluralist, tolerant body which strove to keep a balance between the different sections',⁷² and notes how Foot was trying to keep both the Left and Right together during the internal conflict over the reform of the Electoral College and the re-selection of candidates.⁷³ As with the Callaghan biography, Morgan notes the sense of betrayal that Owen, Rodgers and Williams felt towards Callaghan after the Bishop's Stortford Commission of Enquiry even though he opposed the changes, and notes that Foot opposed them also. Morgan also notes the Crewe/King account of the votes of future SDP members for Foot in order to cause the split in the Labour Party, with Healey's falling out with Rodgers and Owen a contributing factor (Morgan names three of the MPs said to have voted for Foot – Jeffrey Thomas, Tom Ellis and Neville Sanderson). Morgan also adds 'one alleged oddity was that Harold Wilson told Healey that he voted for him on the first ballot, but for Foot on the second'.⁷⁴ In the following chapter, Morgan accounts how Foot tried to keep members of the right within the Party by having a 'distinctly Healeyite' Shadow Cabinet, but how William Rodgers refused all shadow posts (and Morgan even refers to personal animosity between the two).⁷⁵ This account is followed by the description of the Special Wembley Conference of 1981 to vote on the Electoral College, 'a dreadful occasion in every respect, with vitriolic bitterness among many delegates towards the party right'.⁷⁶ Despite Foot's personal dislike of Owen and Rodgers (a feeling that was mutual), Morgan notes how he tried to persuade them to stay and devotes almost two pages to the way he tried to keep Shirley

⁷¹ Giles Radice, *Diaries 1980-2001: From Political Disaster to Election Triumph: The Political Diaries of Giles Radice* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 2004), p.30

⁷² Kenneth O. Morgan, *Michael Foot – A Life* (London: Harper Perennial, 2007), p.374

⁷³ Morgan, *Michael Foot – A Life*, p.374

⁷⁴ Morgan, *Michael Foot – A Life*, p.379

⁷⁵ Morgan, *Michael Foot – A Life*, pp.391-392

⁷⁶ Morgan, *Michael Foot – A Life*, pp.393

Williams in the party to no avail and how eventually the breakaway 'was a massive blow to Michael Foot. It coloured the whole of his period as leader'.⁷⁷

Foot's successor as leader Neil Kinnock has yet to produce a memoir of his time in politics but he has been well served by two biographies by George Drower⁷⁸ and Martin Westlake⁷⁹. In his memoir, *Who Goes Home?*⁸⁰, Kinnock's deputy Roy Hattersley produces an entertaining account of his parliamentary career. Hattersley is forthright, stating that whilst some MPs joined the SDP 'out of a combination of conviction and despair...most dressed up self-interest to look like principle. By protecting themselves, they exposed Britain to a full decade of Thatcherism'.⁸¹ Hattersley states that there was one consolation that he could take and that was that by remaining he helped the revisionist cause to survive in the Labour Party by helping to found Labour Solidarity alongside right-wing MPs such as John Smith, Giles Radice and Ken Weetch. 'Back in 1981, I was one of the people who stood their ground, argued against absurdity, organised (no matter how incompetently) on behalf of reason and, in consequence, saved the Labour Party'.⁸² Hattersley wrote prolifically in the 1980s and beyond and his work on the updating of revisionism, *Choose Freedom*, was to be significant in influencing the development of the production of the document *A Statement of Democratic Socialist Aims and Values* that preceded the commencement of the Policy Review.

Each of the members of the Gang of Four produced memoirs and provided recollections of their part in the breakaway. Considered to be the most popular of the four in the country, Shirley Williams published her memoirs in 2009 and the two chapters in which she recounts

⁷⁷ Morgan, *Michael Foot – A Life*, pp.393

⁷⁸ George Drower, *Kinnock* (South Woodham Ferrers: The Publishing Corporation U.K. Limited, 1994)

⁷⁹ Martin Westlake, *Kinnock* (London: Ian St John, Little, Brown, 2001)

⁸⁰ Roy Hattersley, *Between Ourselves* (London: Pan Books, 1994); Roy Hattersley, *Choose Freedom*, (London: Penguin Books, 1987); Roy Hattersley, *Fifty Years On: A Prejudiced History of Britain Since the War* (London: Brown & Company, 1997); Roy Hattersley, *Who Goes Home? – Scenes from a Political Life* (London: Little, Brown and Company, 1995)

⁸¹ Roy Hattersley, *Who Goes Home? – Scenes from a Political Life* (London: Little, Brown and Company, 1995), p.235

⁸² Hattersley, *Who Goes Home?*, pp.235-236

the breakaway convey the pain of her decision to leave Labour and begin with her losing her seat in 1979. Whilst out of Parliament, Williams was re-elected to the NEC recalls how at the time she placed those on the 'soft' Left as being in league with the 'hard' left who she accused of extra-parliamentary activity and offers a *mea culpa* in believing this at the time⁸³ Williams also recounts how that initially she did not approve of the idea of the new political party (and dismissed the concept after the Dimbleby speech) but that her conversion to the idea came with a culmination of events rather than any one in particular. On the Labour Leadership elections, Williams says that whilst those on the right were disappointed with Healey's tactics and attitude, the majority of them voted for him except for a few who, as has been noted, voted for Foot to exacerbate a split. Williams names one of these MPs as the late Neville Sanderson.⁸⁴

Williams also provides an insight into her belief at the time of what the new party should be and that it should be democratic socialist (a sentiment similar to Owen and Rodgers) and that Roy Jenkins was by this stage less inclined to this direction.⁸⁵ Williams also contends that it was due to the 'calming influence' of William Whitelaw over Margaret Thatcher that prevented more liberal minded Conservatives joining the SDP rather than the one MP and few councillors that did eventually defect.⁸⁶ Williams then provides an account of her battles for the seat of Crosby in 1981 and concludes that, whilst there would be more by-election victories to come, the election of Healey as Labour's Deputy Leader was the turning point and that if Tony Benn had won, the defections to the SDP would have gathered pace.⁸⁷

Roy Jenkins's memoirs provide a lengthy account of his time in politics and his time as Home Secretary and Chancellor, taking in his involvements in the battles between the Bevanites and

⁸³ Shirley Williams, *Climbing the Bookshelves: The Autobiography of Shirley Williams* (London: Virago Press Ltd, 2009), p.226

⁸⁴ Williams, *Climbing the Bookshelves*, p.279

⁸⁵ Williams, *Climbing the Bookshelves*, p.281

⁸⁶ Williams, *Climbing the Bookshelves*, p.292

⁸⁷ Williams, *Climbing the Bookshelves*, p.297

the Gaitskellites and his central role in the pro-European campaign in the 1975 Referendum. Jenkins recalls his Dimbleby Lecture and the call for a 'radical centre' in British politics to bring about a re-alignment and how his timing coincided with the disillusionment of the right within the Labour Party. Jenkins disputes that there was a particular reason for the breakaway, refuting 'the conventional wisdom...that Healey's defeat by Foot so dismayed the Social Democrats as to open the road to the SDP,' saying that whilst this made the defections and by-elections easier, the right in the Labour Party had by 1980 'become so disenchanted by Healey that his defeat was rather a relief to them'.⁸⁸ Jenkins's account devotes time to his relations with the defectors, praising the Jenkinsites such as David Marquand and recounting his close friendship with Bill Rodgers and their shared battles over Europe.⁸⁹ Jenkins acknowledges that the defection of Shirley Williams was 'a great prize', yet also contends that if Williams had remained within Labour, this would not have been a 'trauma' in the same way it would have been if Bill Rodgers had decided not to defect.⁹⁰ As perhaps was to be expected, Jenkins provides a cool appraisal of David Owen, with whom he had a difficult relationship and notes that 'the cause of centre politics...would have been better off without him,' and that he was not crucial to the successful launch of the SDP.⁹¹ Jenkins then provides his memories of the Glasgow Hillhead By-Election in 1982 and his frustrations of Parliament as leader of the SDP and his subsequent resignation in 1983.

Augmenting Jenkins' own work was John Campbell's biography, *Roy Jenkins: A Well-Rounded Life*,⁹² which provides an excellent account of the life of Jenkins and his career within the Labour Party. The account of his tenure as Home Secretary during the 'Liberal Hour' of 1967-68 is touched upon in the fourth chapter of this thesis as it examines Labour's social liberal traditions.

⁸⁸ Roy Jenkins, *A Life at the Centre* (London: Macmillan London, 1991), p.530

⁸⁹ Jenkins, *A Life at the Centre*, p.527

⁹⁰ Jenkins, *A Life at the Centre*, p.528

⁹¹ Jenkins, *A Life at the Centre*, p.532

⁹² John Campbell, *Roy Jenkins: A Well-Rounded Life* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2014)

At 822 pages, David Owen's autobiography provides a highly detailed account of his time in politics, and it provides Owen's view of why the breakaway took place, highlighting his frustration with 'people who ought to have known better' for their refusal to face up to the infiltration of Militant, and contends this that whilst he was willing to remain and struggle for the cause of the right within the Labour Party, it was this lack of desire to back his intervention in the debate on unilateral disarmament that made his decision to leave become much more certain.⁹³ This was further confirmed after the decision to adopt the electoral college and Owen's call for 'one member, one vote' was rejected.⁹⁴ Owen also recalls how the meetings within the Manifesto Group became more fractious and acrimonious as the breakaway moved nearer (an account that was to be verified by Roy Hattersley).⁹⁵ Perhaps more than the other 'Gang of Four', Owen provides an explanation of his ideological standpoint, noting how in his book *Face the Future* he calls for less statism and a move away from the Webb's 'Fabian paternalism' which was 'an historical error bedevilling every Labour Government'.⁹⁶ Nevertheless, Owen also stated that he was determined for the SDP to be part of the Socialist International, 'using continental social democracy as the start of a fresh political start in Britain,' and that he himself was 'determined to remain a redistributionist'.⁹⁷

William Rodgers' autobiography, *Fourth Amongst Equals*, provides an excellent account of his growing up in Liverpool and his career in politics. Highlighting his role as the main organiser of the Gaistkellite 'Campaign for Democratic Socialism' and time as a Cabinet minister, Rodgers discusses how the Manifesto Group and the Campaign for Labour victory came into being as a response to left-wing activism. Rodgers employs two chapters to recount the events of the breakaway, contending that Callaghan should have stepped down earlier in order for Healey to become leader as the former's authority was slipping but then highlights his

⁹³ David Owen, *Time to Declare* (London: Michael Joseph Ltd, 1991) p.432

⁹⁴ Owen, *Time to Declare*, p.441

⁹⁵ Owen, *Time to Declare*, p.474

⁹⁶ Owen, *Time to Declare*, p.483

⁹⁷ Owen, *Time to Declare*, p.446

frustration at Healey's apparent lack of will to fight.⁹⁸ Rodgers also states that the grouping between David Owen, Shirley Williams and himself had come about in Spring 1979 as a result of their opposition to the proposed constitutional changes.⁹⁹ Rodgers is kind in his appraisal of Williams but notes how he had 'doubts' about Owen, writing in his diary, 'What does David really stand for except himself?'¹⁰⁰

As with Williams, Rodgers recounts the publication of the letter to the *Guardian* and *Daily Mirror* by the 'Gang of Three' in response to the Bishop's Stortford Commission of Enquiry and his response to the Jenkins Dimbleby Lecture. Rodgers was not able to say if the lecture changed minds in the Labour Party, but he recognised that it signalled Jenkins' intention to return to British politics.¹⁰¹ Rodgers also provides his account of his speech at Abertilly on 30th November in which he warned that the Labour Party had a year in which to 'save itself' and 'remain a broad coalition of democratic socialists' and that the consequence of a fight to the last with the 'hard' left would be that if they won, those who considered themselves moderate would leave.¹⁰² Rodgers also notes that at this point, both he and Shirley Williams, whilst now discussing in general terms a new political party, were still committed to remaining inside the Labour Party.¹⁰³

For Rodgers, it appears that the catalyst for the break came with the election of Foot as Leader and he notes that for some MPs it 'conveniently settled things'.¹⁰⁴ Rodgers also says that when Foot gave his shadow Defence portfolio to a member of CND this provided further ammunition but admits that if Foot had offered him a significant position, he would have found it difficult to leave, and would have remained to be 'desperately miserable throughout Labour's years of

⁹⁸ William Rodgers, *Fourth Amongst Equals: The Autobiography of Bill Rodgers* (London: Politico's Publishing Ltd), pp.188-191

⁹⁹ Rodgers, *Fourth Amongst Equals*, p.192

¹⁰⁰ Rodgers, *Fourth Amongst Equals*, p.194

¹⁰¹ Rodgers, *Fourth Amongst Equals*, p.198

¹⁰² Rodgers, *Fourth Amongst Equals*, p.199

¹⁰³ Rodgers, *Fourth Amongst Equals*, p.200

¹⁰⁴ Rodgers, *Fourth Amongst Equals*, p.203

failure'.¹⁰⁵ Rodgers also writes of how his 'impatience grew at the steady erosion of the will to fight', and how whilst Roy Hattersley, Merlyn Rees, Eric Varley and John Smith were of similar mindset to the defectors, they were not prepared to challenge the NEC or Unions.¹⁰⁶ Rodgers acknowledges the bitter acrimony, most regularly towards Roy Hattersley, and provides an episode in which both he and Giles Radice were prevented from physically attacking each other after a final attempt by members of the Manifesto group to convince Rodgers to remain within Labour and how it was a further fifteen years until they were again on friendly terms.¹⁰⁷

Writing of the immediate aftermath of the Limehouse Declaration, Rodgers states that it was necessary for the new party to gain MPs from the Conservatives in order not to be seen as 'a splinter of the Labour Party' and acknowledges that whilst there were potential recruits at the height of Mrs. Thatcher's unpopularity in 1981, the Falklands War finished this possibility.¹⁰⁸ Rodgers expresses the personal pain, how he was forced out from the Fabian Society (of which he was a General Secretary), lost contact with people in his constituency party that he had worked with for twenty years and culminated with his defeat at the General Election 1983.

Giles Radice's *Friends and Rivals* is an insight into the relationship between the three great figures on the post-war Labour Right, Roy Jenkins, Denis Healey and Tony Crosland. Radice, a former Labour MP from the right of the party, offers a critical appraisal of three men he greatly admired, blaming Healey's poor tactics up to and during the leadership election and as being a factor in the breakaway, which Crewe and King also ventured.¹⁰⁹ However, Radice also portrays Healey's narrow victory as Deputy Leader over Tony Benn as the turning point in the fortunes of the Labour Party and also the SDP. Radice suggests that a further thirty or

¹⁰⁵ Rodgers, *Fourth Amongst Equals*, p.204

¹⁰⁶ Rodgers, *Fourth Amongst Equals*, p.198

¹⁰⁷ Rodgers, *Fourth Amongst Equals*, p.198

¹⁰⁸ Rodgers, *Fourth Amongst Equals*, p.215

¹⁰⁹ Giles Radice, *Friends and Rivals: Crosland, Jenkins and Healey* (London: Little Brown, 2002), p.293

forty MPs may have left the Labour Party, and that this was the moment Healey actually saved the party itself.¹¹⁰

Radice proffers the suggestion that for some of those on the right who had defected to the SDP it was ultimately a redundant exercise considering the eventual direction that the party was to undertake. He argued the Limehouse Declaration was ‘an unexceptional revisionist document,’ that would appeal to ‘nearly all German Social Democrats, most Labour right-wingers of the time and indeed the vast majority of Tony Blair’s New Labour Party’.¹¹¹ Radice also offers the opinion that had Healey and Jenkins (and also Crosland) been able to work together in the 1970s, ‘it could have made a crucial difference, not only to their own careers, but also to the Social Democratic position inside the Labour Party and to the fate of Labour itself,’ and that Hugh Gaitskell would ‘have been amazed to find two of his closest revisionist allies of the 1950s fighting the 1983 election in different parties’.¹¹²

Radice’s own diaries are excellent sources of contemporary information as are the diaries of Tony Benn¹¹³¹¹⁴. These provide autobiographical information as it provides an insight to the thinking of the protagonists on or around the time certain events take place. Use of diary entries from these texts are used in this thesis.

Dianne Hayter’s personal account of the organisation of the Labour Party centre-right against the hard left, *Fightback!*¹¹⁵, is an excellent account of the development and organisation of the

¹¹⁰ Radice, *Friends and Rivals*, p.308

¹¹¹ Radice, *Friends and Rivals*, p.296

¹¹² Radice, *Friends and Rivals*, p.333

¹¹³ Giles Radice, *Diaries 1980-2001: From Political Disaster to Election Triumph: The Political Diaries of Giles Radice* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 2004)

¹¹⁴ Tony Benn, *A Blaze of Autumn Sunshine* (London: Arrow, 2014); Tony Benn, *Against the Tide: Diaries, 1973-77* (London: Arrow Books, 1991); Tony Benn (Edited by Chris Mullin), *Arguments for Socialism* (London: Penguin Books, 1984); Tony Benn, *The Benn Diaries (New Single Volume Edition)*, (London: Arrow Books, 1996); Tony Benn, *Conflicts of Interest: Diaries, 1977-80* (London: Arrow Books, 1991); Tony Benn, *The End of an Era: Diaries 1980-90* (London: Arrow Books, 1994); Tony Benn, *Free At Last! Diaries 1991-2001* (London: Arrow, 2003); Tony Benn, *More Time for Politics: Diaries 2001-2007* (London: Arrow, 2008)

¹¹⁵ Dianne Hayter, *Fightback! Labour’s Traditional Right in the 1970s and 1980s (Critical Labour Movement Studies)* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005)

Labour Solidarity group and the collection of trade unions sympathetic to their cause (the St Ermin's Group). Hayter suggests that there was no unifying ideological theme for those groups coalescing against those supporting Tony Benn or separately the Militant Tendency.

The overall theme of these texts is of Labour struggling to establish its identity against a backdrop of bitter internal division and for the right in particular attempting to regain what their purpose was in the face of advances by the far left and an ideologically strident Conservative Government. After being the dominant faction within Labour in the post-war period, and despite there not being much in the way of ideological difference, revisionists could no longer agree on whether the party was still capable of being an instrument of progressive change.

Thesis Structure

The first chapter of the thesis is an examination of the revisionists in the Labour Party and what it meant to be someone on the party's revisionist wing (declared or perceived), what the philosophical and ideological commonalities were within this loose grouping and also where they differed. This chapter also explores Labour's time in Government in the late 1960s when it ushered in the 'Liberal Hour' despite much of the legislation being at odds with some of the beliefs of working class communities it was set up to represent. It also examines how the development of post-war policy, particularly membership of the European Economic Community, saw the hardening of positions and attitudes within the party. It aims to demonstrate how there had been a history of groups within the Labour Party that had formed to stave off left-wing influence since the post-war period and how such groups – the Campaign for Democratic Socialism (CDS), Manifesto Group, Campaign for Labour Victory – were to provide the future members of the Social Democratic Party. It shows how the battles in the 1950s, between the Gaitskellites and the Bevanites were to continue into the 1960s and '70s.

Prior to the 1979 election, the party had suffered resignations, particularly over Europe, which they had managed to contain, with notable shadow ministers such as Roy Jenkins and David Owen returning to the Cabinet once Labour had been returned to power. The 1970s was to see the first instances of candidates leaving the party to stand as moderate Social Democratic candidates, most notably Dick Taverne in 1974. Yet whilst these incidents of independent candidates were short-lived, they appeared to pave the way for a future platform for those MPs who were against the direction the party appeared to be taking. Both the first and second chapters aim to utilise some of the research documentation acquired at the People's History Museum in central Manchester; in particular the papers of George (now Lord) Robertson, who was a leading organiser of the Manifesto Group of MPs. The documentation that has been examined so far contains contemporary pamphlets from the Manifesto, Campaign for Labour Victory and Solidarity groups and correspondence between Robertson and members of the Manifesto Group such as Giles Radice (who was to remain within the Labour Party as a founder and organiser of the Solidarity Group and as a member of the Shadow Cabinet) and those who were subsequently to leave, such as Bill Rodgers and John Wrigglesworth amongst others.

The second chapter examines the political landscape after Margaret Thatcher's success in the General Election and the intense pressure and criticism that was directed towards the centre right of the Parliamentary Labour Party. This chapter critically assesses the state of the Labour Party after the loss in 1979, how the right of the party began to split and that the origins of the SDP can be seen as crystallising quickly after 1979. The chapter develops Eric Shaw's observation about the multiple crises that Labour faced during this period and what these were. The first was a crisis of confidence of those on the right of the party in the leadership of the party to provide effective direction. The second was a crisis of legitimacy, as the argument concerning the introduction of a more representative system over matters of policy making and leadership election led to competing visions to address Labour's democratic deficit. Finally

there was the crisis of faith as the establishment of the Electoral College, the election of Michael Foot as leader and the shift to the left further eroded the faith that those on Labour's right may still have had. For some, departure was the only real alternative to remaining in a party that had been their ideological home for decades.

Chapter Three focuses on the period between 1981 and 1983 and examines why some on the Labour Party's right determined to stay within the party whilst others felt it necessary to leave it to join the Social Democrats. It also examines how those who remained in the Labour Party understood the reasons behind the SDP's formation and how this influenced their thinking. It assesses what they considered to be the differences between their interpretations of social democracy and those of the Social Democrats, and focuses on the main differences between those who stayed and those who left. In doing so it will employ interviews with Giles Radice, Dianne Hayter and Austin Mitchell, as well as local activists in Oldham and Cambridge. The chapter also looks at the emergence of a slowly developing reaction against the Bennite Hard Left by the supporters of Michael Foot and how the Tribune group assisted with the stemming of further defections of MPs from the Labour right by abstaining on the vote for the Deputy Leadership elections, paving the way for the eventual establishment of a coalition of soft left and revisionist social democrats under the leadership of Neil Kinnock and Roy Hattersley.

Chapter Four is an analysis of Labour's social liberalism in the 1980s in relation to the pursuit of greater rights for gay and lesbian people and the area of video censorship from the perspective of the Labour Party itself. It is an overview of the gradualist, reforming aspects of Labour's social policies during a decade of opposition to the economic excess and moral Puritanism that were the dominant forces of the governing Conservative Party. The purpose is to show that, in spite of pressure to buckle and tack away from nostrums that were seemingly unpopular from a political perspective, Labour in the 1980s was able to demonstrate a strong sense of social liberalism that had long existed within the wider movement and was part of the

social democratic tradition and presenting the classic dilemma faced by the Labour Party in how it could appeal to both the perceived liberal-minded middle classes and the more socially conservative working class which it was set up to serve. It also shows how the ideas and attitudes with some of those on the right who remained in the Labour Party were not always that different from those who left and how the SDP's programme on social matters could sometimes reflect that of the party it splintered from.

The fifth and final chapter analyses and reflects on the slow rebuilding process which was to take place after the disaster of the 1983 General Election. It also looks at how Labour was to find continued difficulties in dealing with the establishment of the Social Democrats as one of the main political parties, a process which was to advance Labour's move from its left-wing policies to a more centrist position. The chapter notes the election of Neil Kinnock as Labour leader and how, during the backdrop of a dominant Conservative Government and the crises of the Militant expulsions and the Miners' Strike, he attempted to establish the party not only as a credible opposition but as a potential Government in waiting. The chapter then analyses the defeat at the 1987 General Election and the subsequent setting up of the Policy Review which was to see significant changes in Labour's previous stances on European Community membership and nuclear deterrence, two policies which had been a cause of the schism between the right and the left of the party since the 1950s. The chapter concludes with the emphatic victory of Neil Kinnock over Tony Benn when the latter challenged for the Labour leadership, a move that was to see the far left increasingly marginalised within the party for almost thirty years.

The conclusion will then examine how New Labour's pretence to revisionism was undermined by its period in office which was to see less of a liberal Social Democratic administration than a more liberal corporatism that saw increasing centralisation, this despite it committing itself to the devolving of power to three nations. This will place the SDP's formation within the wider history of the Labour Party. It also questions whether social democratic revisionism is still

relevant with the election of the former Bennite Jeremy Corbyn and his platform of left-wing populism.

The Crisis of Labour Revisionism and its roots

The schism that took place with the creation of the Social Democratic Party can be directly led back to the loss of power in 1951 and the protracted and damaging battles that took place throughout the decade. The bitter struggle for influence and policy direction between the supporters of Hugh Gaitskell on the right and Aneurin Bevan on the left had been seemingly resolved or at least neutralised by the onset of the 1960s and the advent of Government. Yet Government only masked the resentments and enmity that seemingly remained below the surface and it was to take another defeat in 1970 to reveal that the divisions still remained, exacerbated and amplified by a growing militancy on both wings of the party. As with 1964, the narrow victories of February and October 1974 temporarily masked these divisions and they were to erupt with occasional ferocity, acting as markers for the greater schism to come. The defeat of 1979 and the breakaway crisis of 1981 was the ultimate outcome of a serious failure of the Labour right to define and defend its position in the face of a resurgent left wing and a more ideologically strident and free market Conservative Party.

There is a need to examine the history of the breakaway of the Social Democratic Party and its impact on the Labour Party over thirty-five years later, to detail how the revisionists eventually triumphed within the Labour Party and yet are now experiencing the loss of power as their predecessors had in 1979. It also examines how the Labour Party is currently enduring a turn of the cycle and witnessing a resumption of hostilities between right and left, with the latter now clearly in the ascendancy. Despite the advances of the left (and with the benefit of hindsight) the threat to the hegemony of revisionism within the Labour party may not have been ultimately at risk in the early 1980s yet for many on the Labour right it felt as though their faction no longer had a place within the movement and was unwelcome in the 'broad church'

of differing variations of socialist thought that Labour had long professed to be. Labour ultimately survived the breakaway and formation of the SDP and the 'broad church' continued to allow different members of the congregation. The lessons and experiences of this period help to explain the current state and potential future of the social democratic tradition in the party during the present day.

Chapter One

The ideology of Labour Revisionism 1970-79

It is democracy rather than socialism that has plagued Labour throughout its singularly unfraternal history.

Kenneth O. Morgan¹¹⁶

Introduction

To understand the events that led up to and followed the General Election defeat of the Labour Government in 1979 it is necessary to first examine the circumstances the party found itself in prior to the defeat. In this chapter there is an examination of the various ideological strains within the party, how the theory of a British social democratic tradition had developed, what it meant to be someone on the Labour Party's revisionist wing (declared or perceived), what the philosophical and ideological commonalities were within this loose grouping and also where they differed. It also examines how the development of post-war policy, particularly membership of the European Economic Community, saw the hardening of positions and attitudes within the party.

This chapter will also examine the reactions within the Labour Party to the defeat suffered at the 1979 General Election and consider how this can be viewed in relation to the schism that was to occur in early 1981. The challenge for the traditional right of the Labour Party was that it was faced with an increasing number of strident voices questioning its very purpose. From the Campaign for Labour Victory and Manifesto groups to those now outside of the Labour movement - the members of the right-wing Social Democratic Association (SDA) and the former Labour MP David Marquand - all had begun to openly question whether Labour was

¹¹⁶ Kenneth O. Morgan, 'The High and Low Politics of Labour: Keir Hardie to Michael Foot', in Michael Bentley, and John Stevenson (Editors), *High and Low Politics in Modern Britain* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983), p.312

capable of delivering on the aims of 'traditional welfare-state social democracy'. What was now being called for was a sense of leadership for the Social Democratic right and the development of the conception of an alternative project that could operate from outside the Labour Party.

For the soft left the coming years were to be a quixotic period with greater advances in achieving their dominance of the party with the election of Michael Foot as leader. Yet this victory was to be tinged with the knowledge that without the right's counterbalance the prospect of being in a position to execute their cherished aims would remain remote. For the hard left, Tony Benn was to see the success of his constitutional aims reach their zenith and yet both he and his supporters were ultimately to be denied at a time of potentially their greatest triumph.

This chapter is also an examination of failure: failure of a Labour Party returned to opposition but unable to quickly regroup and effectively challenge a Conservative Government that struggled in the early stages of its tenure. It was a party hamstrung by its own divisions and its inability to renew the established coexistence of the differing strands that threaded together to enable Labour to operate as a coherent whole. It was also a failure of the Labour Right to maintain unity in the face of left-wing dominance, with many left-wing MPs and activists resentful towards those that they felt responsible for Labour's failure in Government. Such anger and resentment was to cripple the party from almost the moment it lost power in May 1979. The fallout of May 1979 was to see the party split and the defectors offer dynamism in comparison to a Labour Party which had been condemned for its ineffectiveness and rigidity.

The Ideology of Labour Revisionism

In common with other modern British political parties, Labour has often struggled to define exactly what its philosophy actually is. Anthony Crosland's quote, in which he refers to Labour's origins being formed on no 'body of doctrine at all, and has always preserved a

marked anti-doctrinal and anti-theoretical bias,¹¹⁷ could also be applied to the main British political parties, certainly prior to the late 1960s and the emergence of more ideologically inclined groups within the Conservative and Labour movements.

Tony Benn described the Labour Party as a broad church of differing socialist views held together by the concept of redistribution of national wealth and resources in order to reduce inequality and to provide a more harmonious society. Benn further suggested that the Labour Party was not a socialist party but had socialists within it which perhaps underlines the reluctance to ascribe a particular ideology to the disparate elements within the movement that the party represents.¹¹⁸ Yet in saying this, Benn contradicts the statement of declaration that the party makes even to this day – that the party is a democratic socialist organisation.

The way in which the Labour Party evolved was as organic as the way the British Conservative and Unionist Party developed and changed over the course of the last century. This was in spite of a constitution which contained specific elements of socialist ideology, notably Clause IV which was itself the source of controversy for the Labour Party's in the twentieth century. Labour had been a loose coalition of associations and groups since its inception as the Labour Representation Committee (LRC) in 1900, an amalgamation of (but not restricted to) trade unions, Fabians, the original Scottish Labour Party, the Independent Labour Party and Christian Socialists. This was the first organised grouping of left-wing groups in the British Isles and from the beginning it faced the same internal strains as those encountered by the established parties of the Conservatives and Liberals. Coalescing around the idea of organising parliamentary representation of an increasingly radical and unionised working-class, the LRC was almost from the very beginning faced with how it would achieve the aim of improving the working and living conditions for those it represented. George Shepherd, in his essay 'Labour's Early Days' makes the wry observation; 'There were amongst the

¹¹⁷ Anthony Crosland, *The Future of Socialism* (London: Constable, 2006), p.52

¹¹⁸ Tony Benn Interview, The Today Programme, BBC Radio 4, 10 February 2006

Committee Liberal-Labour men, Marxist doctrinaires, permeaters and political independence men. That such a committee actually got down to writing out an agenda is one of the most surprising things in the Labour Party's history'.¹¹⁹

The Labour Government of 1945 to 1951 led by Clement Attlee is widely regarded as one of the most important Governments of the Twentieth Century and is held in mythical regard by party members even to the present day of New Labour and the 'Third Way'. The first post-war Labour Government, which commanded a huge majority and had experienced ministers from the years of wartime Coalition, was clearly ideological when it had applied socialist policies such as the nationalisation of the major industries and the introduction of the Welfare State and the National Health Service. The Attlee Government had transformed Britain in such a radically different way in a short space of time, and in the midst of a bankrupt and war-ravaged economy. Yet, as far as socialism was concerned, for some this simply was what Labour did when it was in power and the pragmatic approach of Herbert Morrison and Ernest Bevin, the 'Labourist' sensibilities adopted by right-wing Labour leaders and union leaders, held sway.

By the time of the 1950 General Election there was uncertainty within the party as to how to proceed in the wake of the monumental changes that had already been introduced. In the event, the Labour manifesto was effectively for the preservation of what had been implemented with references to further nationalisation kept to a minimum and was a manifesto of management rather than radicalism. This would seem in retrospect to be perfectly sensible. Labour has never been wedded to a particular strand of socialist theory because seemingly hardwired into the British psyche is an in-built anathema to intellectual theorising and dogma. The Attlee Government introduced the basis of a mixed economy in the midst of economic conditions that were still geared to the war effort and utilised what it had learned in Government to great effect. Five years later it was now taking a more measured approach particularly in

¹¹⁹ Lord Shepherd, '*Labour's Early Days*', Originally published by the N.C.L.C. in 1950 [online] Available ><http://www.labour-history.org.uk/Texts/Early-days.htm> [Accessed 21 May 2015]

the face of public antipathy to the austerity of the post-war economy and no appetite for further nationalisation.

The lionisation of the Attlee Government has been seen as the reason for the subsequent failures of subsequent Labour Governments or the failure for the party to appeal sufficiently to the electorate. For Maurice Glasman, as part of his Blue Labour critique of the reliance of the party to implement policy through state, Government under Attlee 'became the exclusive instrument of societal transformation,'¹²⁰ and as such provided the blueprint for the ineffective Labour Governments to follow:

The legacy was a strategy that was either based upon being more technocratic, modernising and efficient than our capitalist rivals or to mine a reserve of resentment. It was not based on organising but mobilisation, on administration rather than participation, on entitlement rather than responsibility, on money rather than power, on policies rather than an institutional politics. It was not a good thing.¹²¹

This criticism of the overly bureaucratic nature of Labour's post-war nationalisation programmes is of course not new. Panitch and Leys quote the then left-wing MP Brian Sedgemore at the Labour Conference of 1971 who said that Labour had been hamstrung by the statism implemented as a result of 'the mistakes of 1945 when, almost by accident, Clement Attlee's Government modelled the nationalised industries on Herbert Morrison's water boards'.^{122 123} It could be seen as the epitome of what was British Socialism, what was to be labelled derisively by Ralph Miliband two decades later as 'Labourism', or as corporatism

¹²⁰ Maurice Glasman, Key note speech to the Australian Society for the Study of Labour History, 13th Biennial National Labour History Conference, *Blue Labour.org*, 11th July 2013, accessed via >
<http://www.bluelabour.org/2013/12/24/1945-and-all-that/> [accessed 10th September 2014]

¹²¹ Maurice Glasman, Key note speech to the Australian Society for the Study of Labour History, 13th Biennial National Labour History Conference, *Blue Labour.org*, 11th July 2013, accessed via >
<http://www.bluelabour.org/2013/12/24/1945-and-all-that/> [accessed 10th September 2014]

¹²² Sedgemore was to defect to the Liberal Democrats in 2005.

¹²³ Colin Leys and Leo Pannitch, *The End of Parliamentary Socialism: From New Left to New Labour* (London: Verso May, 2001), p.73

by Tony Benn in *Arguments for Socialism*.¹²⁴ In future years the approach to planning and economy would come in for criticism from the left of the party, yet the first theoretical critique would come from the right.

In his 1956 book *The Future of Socialism*, Tony Crosland described revisionism as a strand of thought in which the traditional Socialist ideals of nationalisation and planning do not in themselves solve the problems of inequality and that there should be more emphasis on individual liberty and wealth creation. Crosland followed in the direct footsteps of a near-contemporary, Evan Durbin, who in 1940 wrote *The Politics of Democratic Socialism* which held that gradual societal change would require the cooperation of the middle classes as well as the trade union movement, as the numbers of the former had risen in the 1930s. Yet Durbin, as Foote notes, did not envisage a change to the requirement of a centrally controlled, planned economy and this is where Durbin and Crosland diverged.¹²⁵ In the late 1930s Douglas Jay (later to be a leading figure on the Labour right) was to write *The Socialist Case* in which he made the case for the state control of transport and energy but that small businesses should continue to remain free from Government.

Crosland had been contributing to the *New Fabian Essays* since the late 1940s and had been setting out the outline of the revisionist case which he was to amplify with *The Future of Socialism*. For Crosland, the post-war settlement of full-employment, public ownership of the main utilities and the Welfare State and its acceptance by the Conservatives showed that the battle for improving the lot of the working-classes had been won but it was now necessary to ensure that this was enhanced by the development of greater equality. Crosland's analysis, completed in the economic boom of the 1950s, stated that the mixed economy of a controlled capitalism allied to state intervention where necessary (primarily in the areas of health and education) meant that there was no longer a need for nationalisation and that there should be

¹²⁴ Tony Benn (Edited by Chris Mullin), *Arguments for Socialism* (London: Penguin Books, 1984), p.140

¹²⁵ Geoffrey Foote, *The Labour Party's Political Thought: A History* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1985), pp.191-199

a different role for Government. Equality in society as opposed to the class war of the pre-war period was the hallmark of Crosland's analysis, with greater emphasis on individual freedom. As the working-classes became more affluent it was necessary for Labour to evaluate whether it should solely remain a party of the working-classes or become a mass movement representing all sections of society. For Crosland, remaining purely a party of the working-classes would consign to ineffective irrelevance.

Crosland's ideas and philosophy was to make him emblematic and iconic figure for the Revisionist right, even though he could be difficult – David Marquand, who recalled upon first meeting Crosland that he 'took an instant dislike to him' had become a convert by the time he was to become an MP in 1964 on account of reading *The Future of Socialism*: 'Gaitskell was dead, and the revisionists needed a champion. George Brown was too unreliable, and Roy Jenkins too remote. Crosland seemed to be the man. More than any of the other Gaitskellites, he cared about ideas.'¹²⁶ Marquand was amongst many young MPs who were to be readily influenced by Crosland and was to be joined by others such as Roy Hattersley and David Owen who were in due course elected to Parliament in 1966.

For Marquand 'Croslandite revisionism is best understood as a historic compromise between British parliamentary socialism and a more inchoate "progressive tradition" going back way of Keynes and Beveridge, to the New Liberalism of the early century'. Now that socialism had tamed capitalism thanks to Labour, 'the real end of socialism was equality; and to that the traditional socialist means of public ownership was no longer essential, or even relevant'.¹²⁷ This provided the theoretical framework for those on the right to base their support of Gaitskell although beyond this there were to be areas of division here also.

¹²⁶ David Marquand, *The Progressive Dilemma: From Lloyd George to Blair* (Second Edition), (London: Phoenix Giant, 1999), p.166

¹²⁷ Marquand, *The Progressive Dilemma*, p.171

With the election defeat of 1959, the Labour right set up a group in 1960 as a more organised response to the left and as a means of protecting the position of the leadership of Gaitskell and also to promote the ideas of the moderate centre and right. This group, Campaign for Democratic Socialism (CDS), was established and organised to attract those MPs and grassroots who were opposed to the unilateralism of the CND supporting left, and also for a more moderate economic policy that was less reliant on the process of nationalisation and state intervention, publicly supporting the attempts of Gaitskell to re-position the party away from the more overtly left-wing programme as established prior to the 1959 election.

Just as Bevan had caused confusion and a sense of betrayal for his conversion to multilateralism, Gaitskell was to provide turmoil for his supporters on two occasions at Conference. At the Party Conference in 1960, Gaitskell set about trying to remove Clause IV. This attempt at what Gaitskell saw as modernising the Labour Party had its supporters on the right such as Douglas Jay as a means of removing what was seen as an out-dated millstone which committed the party to nationalisation. The move was soundly defeated by Conference and moreover it was rejected by those within the trades unions who had been up until this point supportive of Gaitskell, who as Shaw notes, felt it was 'needlessly provocative on tradition and the Party's own sense of past'.¹²⁸

Gaitskell was to further alarm his supporters on the right and in the CDS when he made a vituperative attack on those who wished Britain to join the fledgling European Economic Community (EEC) during his 1962 Conference Speech. This was supported by those on the right who also opposed membership such as Douglas Jay and supported Gaitskell's reasons for the danger that membership posed to Britain's relationship with Commonwealth countries. For those who supported Gaitskell but were in favour of membership this came as a profound disappointment. William Rodgers, soon to be leading light within the CDS, gave his maiden

¹²⁸ Eric Shaw, *The Labour Party Since 1945: Old Labour – New Labour (Making Contemporary Britain)* (Chichester: John Wiley and Sons, 1996), p.63

speech in June 1962 and laid down notice of his future voting intentions within the Commons when he came out in support of Macmillan's application.¹²⁹ This notice of rebellion underlined just how Europe was to be a cause of friction and eventually schism within the revisionist ranks, as was to be seen when Labour was to lose power in 1970.

The Wilson Governments – Corporatism with a Liberal Face

The 1964-1970 Governments led by Gaitskell's successor Harold Wilson were to become a *bête noir* for both the Social Democrats and the left because they were to be seen as the benchmark for corporatism. Eric Hobsbawm was to write 'at no time did the Wilson Governments have a programme worth the name, and hence they could hardly betray it.'¹³⁰ The opinion that the Government would continue to prevent real socialist change was a recurring criticism of the left.

The period of Wilson's Government was to coincide with the radicalism of student political protest and growing industrial militancy. An increase in the numbers of more radical members of Constituency Labour Parties (CLP), what Pannitch refers to as 'the New Activists' saw an increasingly articulate and strategically aware left.¹³¹ An abortive attempt at joining the EEC, an attempt at changing industrial relations which was to alienate union leaders and the trauma of devaluation in 1967 was to tarnish Wilson as leading a Government that was only in power for power's sake, 'the radical potential of the Attlee generation within the party had been lost'.¹³²

Yet this criticism was to neglect the fact that during his period in Government, Wilson, whilst being something of a social conservative, was to preside over a period of unprecedented

¹²⁹ Hugo Young, *This Blessed Plot: Britain and Europe from Churchill to Blair* (Houndmills: Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999), p.261

¹³⁰ Eric Hobsbawm, *The Forward March of Labour Halted* (London: Verso Books, 1981), p.178

¹³¹ Leys and Pannitch, *The End of Parliamentary Socialism*, p.26

¹³² David Coates, *The Labour Party and the Struggle for Socialism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), p.128

societal change which it was able to channel and adapt to with a combination of the introduction of legislation and adroit management by the normally socially conservative Wilson. Labour's post-war social liberalism was a step-change rather than a full-blooded revolt against the Fabian tradition as espoused by the Webbs which had dominated much of the party's thinking. The long fallow period of the 1950s was to see Labour pushed further away from returning to power with three successive election defeats and yet was also to see younger figures from the Labour right such as Anthony Crosland and Roy Jenkins producing books containing critiques on Labour positions on economic policy and also on social attitudes. In *The Future of Socialism* Crosland had railed against 'socially-imposed restrictions on the individuals private life and liberty,' and highlighted laws prohibiting or outlawing licensing times for public houses, divorce and abortion legislation, homosexuality, censorship in the arts and equal rights for women. These, said Crosland, were 'intolerable, and should be highly offensive to socialists, in whose blood there should always run a trace of the anarchist and the libertarian'.¹³³

Similarly in his 1959 book *The Labour Case*, Roy Jenkins was to make the case for reform of the same areas mentioned by Crosland and later described the chapter, 'Is Britain Civilised?' as his "'unauthorised programme' for the Home Office."¹³⁴ John Campbell, in his biography of Jenkins, notes that he had been ahead of Crosland in pushing for the decriminalisation of homosexuality and the abolition of capital punishment and strongly opposed to censorship.¹³⁵ It would be in a little over seven years from the publication of *The Labour Case* that an opportunity to implement the 'unauthorised programme' presented itself. Both Jenkins' and Crosland's social liberalism were to have influence on a later generation of Labour politicians

¹³³ Crosland, *The Future of Socialism*, p.403

¹³⁴ Roy Jenkins, *A Life at the Centre* (London: Macmillan London, 1991), p.180

¹³⁵ John Campbell, *Roy Jenkins: A Well-Rounded Life* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2014) pp.182-183

from across its spectrum, including the future leader of the Greater London Council, Ken Livingstone.¹³⁶

The changes which were to take place at a rapid pace in the 1960s had their origins in the 1950s and beyond and nor were they the sole preserve of those on the left of the political spectrum. The Wolfenden Report of 1957 had put forward the recommendation to relax the laws on the criminalisation of homosexuality. By the turn of the 1960s, there was a growing movement within some of the Conservative Party towards supporting the abolition of capital punishment, including Rab Butler and Henry Brooke.¹³⁷ The ushering in of the so-called 'permissive society' may not have been the direct result of legislation and was the result of society changing at a far more rapid rate than a Britain emerging from a stolid 1950s was prepared for. Yet as the long wait for a return to Government was achieved in 1964, Labour faced a number of private members bills which challenged the pervading social norms. The most significant socially liberal legislation of the post-war era was to be guided through the House of Commons by Roy Jenkins during his tenure as Home Secretary, the so-called 'Liberal Hour'.¹³⁸ Between 1966 and 1970 Britain was to see the repeals of the laws against homosexuality and abortion being illegal, the abolition of hanging and the relaxation of divorce law.

Whilst Harold Wilson had 'strong, egalitarian feelings' with regards to race relations he was otherwise uninterested in other areas and 'cautious' in the area of abortion due to fear of upsetting Catholic constituents, understandable in the light of Barbara Castle's experience in the 1950s.¹³⁹ Yet in spite of such caution Wilson permitted the room for such change to take place, as Ben Pimlott says he was 'happy to accept and encourage, a liberal reform

¹³⁶ Andy Beckett, *Promised You A Miracle* (London: Penguin, 2016), p.136

¹³⁷ Dominic Sandbrook, *White Heat: A History of Britain in the 1960s* (London: Abacus, 2010) p.339

¹³⁸ Jenkins, *A Life at the Centre*, p.199

¹³⁹ As a member of the left, Castle and her fellow Bevanites had been labelled communists by the Bishop of Leeds John Heenan and this had a detrimental effect on the Catholic community in her constituency. Barbara Castle, *Fighting All the Way* (London: Pan Macmillian), p.236

programme that had the backing of the Labour Party intelligentsia'.¹⁴⁰ There was some hostility within Labour including on the front benches – in Jenkins's estimation, three or four ministers were opposed to both the Medical Termination and Sexual Offences Bills, with a substantial number in favour 'and another larger group wished the issues would go away'.

¹⁴¹The Foreign Secretary George Brown felt he was attuned to the working-classes and said that the reforms were to lead to 'a totally disorganized, indecent and unpleasant society'.¹⁴² Brown was aware of the views of many in the constituencies throughout the country as a result of his years of general election campaigning and there were many within Labour who were aware of the limitations of expecting their natural constituents to be accepting of such legislation. As Barbara Castle had noted with her narrow election victory in 1955, the combination of local and religious politics had almost cost her dear. However, the fear of grassroots did not completely act as an inhibitor to an MP in support of the liberalising legislation, an example being David Owen's experience in Plymouth of his stance being at odds with that of his constituency party.¹⁴³

When Labour lost in 1970, it was not the role in which it played in ushering the liberal reforms that sat uneasily with some of its own electoral base but the problems of industrial action and a faltering economy which were the primary reasons for the defeat. The loss of 1970 may have seen the advent of a right-wing Conservative Government which had made a manifesto commitment to such populist measures as restricting immigration (something which chimed with the working-class demographic to which Labour still claimed to represent) yet there was no explicit commitment to rescind the reforms that Labour had introduced. For Labour, their manifesto spoke of 'a better society for all the people of Britain: a strong, just and compassionate society, one where the handling of complex problems may be a source of pride

¹⁴⁰ Ben Pimlott, *Harold Wilson*, (London: Harper Collins, 1993) p.487

¹⁴¹ Jenkins, *A Life at the Centre*, p.208

¹⁴² Sandbrook, *White Heat*, p.457

¹⁴³ Sandbrook, *White Heat*, p.339

to ourselves and an example to the world'.¹⁴⁴ Aside of a commitment to further the remit of the Race Relations Board there were no explicit commitments to further liberal reform.

The unexpected election victory of the Conservatives in 1970 was to herald attempts to introduce trade union and industrial policy that would in less than a decade become more familiar under the guise of Thatcherism, but at this stage meant the first effort to make break from the post-war 'Butskellism' of the mixed economy and the use of state intervention. This move to the right had been mocked by Wilson by his labelling of the Conservatives of being 'Selsdon Man', saying that the so-called right-wing radicalism was nothing of the sort but was simply a throwback to a more regressive age. Yet something had clearly chimed with the British electorate and after six years of Government Labour was again in opposition. When Labour was out of office the clamour for calls for a review of Government policies were immediately heard. All sides of the party wanted to find an explanation as to why the election was lost and as has been noted periods of retrospection and analysis were being undertaken, but as Thorpe notes, it was the right's association with failed policies of the 1960's Government that meant that it struggled to find support amongst the increasingly radical CLP and trade union sections.¹⁴⁵ As it could rightly claim to have been ignored in the 1960's, 'the persecuted true brethren, endlessly defeated by the superior guile and cunning of the Right',¹⁴⁶ the left could not be associated with such failures and began to say it had the answers.

The left began to stake their claims that they knew and understood the problems and failures of the Wilson Government. One of the first was from a man who had in cabinet been considered as a centrist but was now making a claim as a being a representative of the more radical left. In the 1960's, Tony Benn was seen as part of the Centre, pro-NATO and pro-accession to the EEC, with his opposition to nuclear weapons and association with the CND

¹⁴⁴ Labour Party Manifesto – *Labour Party 1970: Now Britain's Strong - Let's Make It Great To Live In*, 1970

¹⁴⁵ Andrew Thorpe, *A History of the British Labour Party* (Second Edition) (Houndmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001), p.167

¹⁴⁶ Simon Hoggart and Alistair Michie, *The Pact: The Inside Story of the Lib-Lab Government 1977-1978* (London: Quartet Books, 1978), p.94

the only possible link to a leftwards slant. Now Benn was attacking the Wilson Government's policy and strategy which he had hitherto previously endorsed. Benn's main thrust was that the Conservatives had been elected on a radical right-wing programme of trades union reform and privatisation, areas that were not alien to their grassroots or instincts. It was therefore only natural for Labour, said Benn, that if the Conservatives had won due to a radical programme, and if the post-war consensus had been broken by the Tories move to the right, to counter this new challenge it would be necessary for Labour to succeed only by becoming radical themselves. What had lost the election for Labour was that support had given way to disillusionment due to the Labour leadership's betrayal of its socialist roots.¹⁴⁷ The criticism from Benn clearly suggested a like for like switch to radical policy was required, particularly in the area of the party's organisation. As already mentioned, there had been a marked militancy within the constituency associations and this was where Benn was to later ascribe his power-base. Benn's analysis was not, as Morgan notes, in keeping with Bevanite criticism of the Labour right. Although Benn shared little with more traditional left-wingers such as Michael Foot and Barbara Castle, they had a common belief that only a more radical programme akin to the 1945 Attlee Government could revive the party's fortunes. This included in the economic field further nationalisation and in foreign affairs an opposition to membership of the European Economic Community. At this point, Benn was still considered to be pro-market unlike Foot and Castle, but Benn's re-positioning towards the radical left was to precede his move to becoming anti-European.

It was to be throughout the 1970s that those who considered themselves to be revisionists suffered a crisis of faith to the extent that serious schisms began to emerge within the party, what Geoffrey Foote termed 'a bottled mood of doubt'.¹⁴⁸ The perceived failures of the Wilson

¹⁴⁷ Kenneth O. Morgan, *Callaghan: A Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), pp.384-5; Henry Pelling, *A Short History of the Labour Party (Eighth Edition)* (Houndmills, Basingstoke: Macmillan Books, 1985) pp.154-5

¹⁴⁸ Foote, *The Labour Party's Political Thought*, p.240

Governments of 1964-70 were therefore not restricted to those on the left who were felt it to be too timid a Government and a missed opportunity for genuine socialism to be introduced.

For the right, the party's loss in 1970, as they saw it, was not because they had not been leftwing enough, but because the Government had failed to address Britain's economic problems and had been unable to control union militancy. Anthony Crosland, writing in a Fabian Pamphlet published at the beginning of 1971 titled *A Social Democratic Britain*, suggested that there was little wrong with the basics of the party's policies in Government and that the failures of the previous Government's policies was 'due partly to slow growth and partly to hostile public attitudes'.¹⁴⁹ The perceived failure to deal with trade union militancy was seen as a deciding factor for the British electorate and this underlined how the unions were now being perceived, no longer as the bastions of the Labourist right, happy to support a moderate right-wing Labour Party as long as it looked after the attentions of the workers they represented but a more left-wing and ideologically inclined faction.

A subsequent Fabian document, *Social Democracy: Beyond Revisionism* by John Gyford and Stephen Haseler was seen as a mild critique of the Benn analysis. It stated that the revisionist policy of judging public ownership 'in terms of its practical contribution rather than its ideological merits' and a focus on the need to tackle inequality and poverty had been put forward during the time of Gaitskell and implemented during the Wilson Government. The problem was whilst it had widened educational participation and had moved resources from the private to the public sectors, doing so at a time of low economic growth may have been 'too radical a policy for the majority of the electorate to accept'.¹⁵⁰ The changes in society has seen more industrial militancy and the decline of the traditional working-class communities had been replaced by 'a more open ended and conceivably more aggressive instrumentalism

¹⁴⁹ Anthony Crosland, *Socialism Now and other essays* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1974), p.72

¹⁵⁰ John Gyford and Stephen Haseler, *Social Democracy – Beyond Revisions* (Fabian Research Series) (London: Fabian Society, 1971), p16

as the worker seeks to assert his own material and social claims within an affluent society'.¹⁵¹ They acknowledged the calls from Benn for more direct participation but said this should come from the Social Democratic wing of the party, that it should stem from the grassroots of the movement and that such policies had been a hallmark of Gaitskell (albeit not always in terms that endeared him to either the left in terms of his approval of nuclear weapons or to his own supporters when it came to Europe). Unlike Gaitskell who had wanted to maintain the links to the unions, there were now some who were questioning this connection in the face of a growing industrial militancy. Writing much later, Denis Healey said that Labour had 'failed to adapt its thinking to the profound social changes it had itself initiated through the Attlee Government after the war', and that due to a rise in living standards people had voted Tory because they 'felt they had something to conserve'. Healey added that 'the trade unions were now emerging as an obstacle both to the election of a Labour Government and to its success once it was in power'.¹⁵²

Despite the centre-right continuing to hold onto the more important and significant portfolios within the Shadow Cabinet, the left's resurgence was beginning to be enforced through the National Executive Committee (NEC), which in turn was to be influenced by the increase in political activity by union members and constituency activists. The emergence of a more radical and militant membership had begun to be noticed in the late 1960s. There had been a continued leftward shift in the Trades Union leadership, albeit towards the moderate, Bevanite left in the case of the two biggest unions, the Transport and General Workers Union (TGWU) and the Amalgamated Engineering Union (AEU), yet these were increasingly critical voices. Within the CLPs throughout the country a new brand of left-wing militancy began to exert their influence. This militancy took hold, suggests Patrick Seyd, due to Wilson's 'pragmatic approach to political issues and the parliamentary left's initial reluctance to become

¹⁵¹ Gyford and Stephen Haseler, *Social Democracy – Beyond Revisions*, p.16

¹⁵² Denis Healey, *The Time of My Life* (London: Penguin Books, 1990), p.346

organisationally involved in constituency campaigning'.¹⁵³ This in turn had created a political vacuum and this allowed groups such as the emerging Militant Tendency to fill the void. Labour's leftward move was to be confirmed by the 1973 Party Conference, with 'Labour's Programme 1973' contained the policy of re-negotiation of the Treaty of Rome and then putting the decision to a referendum. The programme was presented to Conference and was adopted as the party manifesto by a margin of five to one.¹⁵⁴

Europe

Europe was the main policy schism for Labour in the 1970s. The party had suffered resignations over both the decision to vote against the terms of entry to the European Economic Community and the issue of holding a referendum on membership of the EEC. These decisions had led to the temporary departure of notable shadow ministers such as Roy Jenkins and David Owen. These events had led to a sense of despondency to some on the Labour Right, with David Marquand commenting almost twenty years later:

We were engaged in a life and death political struggle for survival within the party and thought it would eventually come around to being in favour of Europe and then we might be able to exert some influence in it, but for the moment it was a question of hanging on. But, I promise you, the sense of isolation we all had was tremendous'.¹⁵⁵

Europe was to also see the schism between members of the revisionist right who saw themselves as Croslandites. Crosland, as with Healey, was ambivalent about the issue of Europe and did not agree with the importance the matter held with those such as Hattersley, Owen, Bill Rodgers and David Marquand. Marquand was to recall that for Crosland whilst still pro-European 'it was certainly not as important as housing finance. It was certainly not worth

¹⁵³ Patrick Seyd, *The Rise and Fall of the Labour Left* (Houndmills, Basingstoke: Macmillan Education Limited, 1987), p.50

¹⁵⁴ Tony Benn, *Against the Tide: Diaries, 1973-77* (London: Arrow Books, 1991), p.68

¹⁵⁵ David Marquand, quoted in Radhika Desai, *Intellectuals and Socialism: "Social Democrats" and the Labour Party*, (London: Lawrence & Wishart Ltd, 1994), p.152

a split in the Labour Party and we should stop being so childish about it'.¹⁵⁶ Marquand, having been told this with David Owen in attendance, felt deserted and betrayed and that as a consequence many of his supporters became affiliated with Roy Jenkins. It could be argued that this act by Crosland helped to form the genesis of support for the SDP in the future yet other MPs such as Roy Hattersley would continue to support him despite this temporary difference over Europe.

It was also during this period that Labour was to see an MP leaving the party to stand as a Social Democratic candidate. In late 1972 Dick Taverne, previously Financial Secretary to the Treasury, had been effectively deselected by his local constituency party in Lincoln which opposed his pro-European opinions. As a result, Taverne stood as an Independent Democratic Labour candidate in the ensuing by-election of 1st March 1973 and won with a majority of over 13,000. The victory prompted Taverne to form the Campaign for Social Democracy as an umbrella group for similarly minded Labour pro-European moderates who were opposed to the direction the Labour Party was taking, both at a national and constituency party level. Taverne's nascent movement lasted for as long as he remained the MP for Lincoln and, after narrowly holding onto the seat during the February 1974 General Election he was to lose to the Labour candidate at the election held in October of the same year. Yet whilst these incidents of independent candidates were short-lived, they appeared to pave the way for a future platform for those MPs who were against the direction the party was seen to be taking and a marker had been left. Taverne had made it clear that it was not just the problems faced at constituency level but also at a national one as well. Not only the NEC but the unions, the one-time bastions of the right, were now becoming more militant and intransigent. 'On all too many issues, the hands may be the hands of Harold Wilson but the voice is the voice of Hugh Scanlon,' declared Taverne in 1972.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁶ Marquand, *The Progressive Dilemma*, p.171

¹⁵⁷ The Observer, 1972, quoted in Lewis Minkin, *The Contentious Alliance: Trade Unions and the Labour Party* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1992), p212

In 1974 Labour was to see itself returned to power at the first time of asking after experiencing defeat four years previously. As industrial unrest began to bite into the economy and the energy shortages began to bite, culminating in the imposition of a three-day working week, an increasingly beleaguered Edward Heath asked for the dissolution of Parliament in order to hold a General Election, which was then scheduled for February 28 1974. The problem for the party was if the nature of its programme would be too radical for the electorate. The problem for Jenkins and other pro-Europeans was that since 1971 the opposition to Europe, even if it was described as opposition to the terms Heath had argued for, was now the majority opinion with some support amongst those on the party right.

The decision to take a more anti-European line had appeared to be in keeping with the mood of the electorate, as the general public viewed the Community in a poor light. An association with the rise in inflation was made with membership of the EEC. During the NEC meeting of May 1973 to discuss policy, Michael Foot had sided with those on the right who opposed the radical plan to nationalise the twenty-five largest companies, the reasoning being that this particular idea might not appeal with the voters and that this may prevent the outcome that he wanted which was a Labour Government committed to holding a referendum to pull out of the EEC.¹⁵⁸

The success of Labour in the February 1974 Election was a victory as unlikely as Heath's had been in 1970 albeit short of an overall majority. Moreover, their share of the vote had dropped to 37.2%, six percent down in comparison with 1970.¹⁵⁹ Factors that may have contributed to the success may have included Roy Jenkins returning in October 1973 to the role of shadow Home Secretary, demonstrating a moderate faction within the Labour shadow Cabinet.¹⁶⁰ The Labour leadership, although having to work with a radical manifesto, emphasised the need for

¹⁵⁸ Simon Hoggart and David Leigh, *Michael Foot: A Portrait*, (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1981), p.164

¹⁵⁹ Hoggart and David Leigh, *Michael Foot: A Portrait*, p.291

¹⁶⁰ Brian Brivati, and Richard Heffernan (Editors), *The Labour Party: A Centennial History*, (Houndmills, Basingstoke: Macmillan Press, 2000), p.280

more conciliation rather than confrontation. Despite the restriction of a minority Government, a legislative programme that was expected to struggle through Parliament was put forward. Wilson's Government had passed through many of the manifesto commitments, although with the lack of an overall majority, parts of the legislative programme had to be passed with support of the Liberals, or watered down during readings in the House of Lords. On twenty occasions the Government had been defeated over amendments to bills.¹⁶¹ It was only a matter of time until the position of the Government became open to a vote of confidence, so the call for a new election was both hoped and expected. At the October 10 1974 Election the increased majority that was craved by Wilson was to be achieved, albeit with a majority of three.

For those opposed to the EEC, the recent negotiations by Callaghan, which were now being used to sell Britain's membership had been a waste of time. The leading revisionist and veteran anti-Marketeer Douglas Jay said that 're-negotiation has changed almost nothing, and almost every Member knows in his heart this is true'.¹⁶² When the matter of continuing membership was put to the House of Commons in a free vote, the motion to remain within the EEC was passed by 396 votes to 172, with 145 of the votes opposed coming from the Labour benches and 33 abstentions.¹⁶³

Later that month, the Special Conference of 26 April 1975 was to see Wilson make a final attempt to win the Party as a whole to accept the new terms that had been negotiated by Callaghan. In the middle of his speech, Wilson appealed for unity and said that he hoped that 'We shall emerge united on all our continuing socialist beliefs'.¹⁶⁴

¹⁶¹ Henry Pelling, *A Short History of the Labour Party* (Eighth Edition) (Houndmills, Basingstoke: Macmillan Books, 1985), p.163

¹⁶² Hansard Commons Debate, Vol. 889, cols.858-61, passim, 7 April 1975, quoted in David Gowland and Arthur Turner, *Reluctant Europeans: Britain and European Integration 1945 – 1998* (Harlow: Pearson Education Limited, 2000), p.144

¹⁶³ David Butler and Uwe Kitzinger, *The 1975 Referendum (Second Edition)* (Houndmills, Basingstoke: Macmillan Press Limited, 1996), p.53

¹⁶⁴ *Labour and the Common Market: Report of a special conference of the Labour Party Sobell Sports Centre, Islington, London, 26 April 1975*, (London: The Labour Party, 1975), p.3

The Special Conference had also shown that the grassroots and union members were as divided as the PLP had been, and that the arguments for and against were essentially the same. A common thread amongst anti-Marketeers was that the EEC was a capitalist club, although Clive Jenkins of the ASTMS attacked the Common Market as 'a joke in terms of effectiveness'.¹⁶⁵ Pro-Marketeers union men spoke of the economic benefits, such as Bernard Bagnari of APEX, whereas Tom Jackson of the Post Office Workers spoke of the EEC as more than about food and economics, but about stability and peace.¹⁶⁶ Fred Pickles of the Dewsbury CLP was to raise an important issue that was to prove pertinent as the referendum got under way. Opposing the NEC recommendation to vote 'No', Pickles said that within his own party, as Constituency Secretary, he was pro-Market, whereas the CLP Chairman was anti-Market.¹⁶⁷ This was a microcosm of the Party nationally, and it confirmed the fact Labour was split.

However, the mood of the electorate with regards the EEC had changed, as the question which was due to be put to them asked whether Britain should remain inside the Community. When the question had been with regards joining the Common Market, the opinion had been heavily against. Shirley Williams had noted that for a long period the opinion polls had shown opposition to Europe in the range of two to one against.¹⁶⁸ The viewpoint now appeared to be moving in favour of remaining inside.

As for the referendum, Cabinet ministers remained as split of its effects as they had been over its being held in the first place. The anti-European Peter Shore felt that the actions of Wilson in allowing ministers to eschew Cabinet responsibility were a positive action, saying that 'there would have been resignations. The opponents of our membership would have found

¹⁶⁵ *Labour and the Common Market: Report of a special conference of the Labour Party Sobell Sports Centre, Islington, London, 26 April 1975*, (London: The Labour Party, 1975), p.37

¹⁶⁶ *Labour and the Common Market: Report of a special conference of the Labour Party Sobell Sports Centre, Islington, London, 26 April 1975*, (London: The Labour Party, 1975), p.24

¹⁶⁷ *Labour and the Common Market: Report of a special conference of the Labour Party Sobell Sports Centre, Islington, London, 26 April 1975*, (London: The Labour Party, 1975), pp.30-31

¹⁶⁸ Author's interview with Lady Williams, 27 April 2004 (undertaken as part of unpublished MA dissertation), and also Butler and Kitzinger, David Butler and Uwe Kitzinger, *The 1975 Referendum*, p.247

themselves on the backbenches. In the event it was surprisingly easy. Everyone had a feeling of respect for each other'.¹⁶⁹

Yet the criticism of Wilson remained to be felt from those pro-Europeans on the Right, with Roy Jenkins continuing to remain unequivocal in his dismay at the period of the referendum. Although naturally pleased with the outcome of the Referendum, Jenkins could not help but see the damage made by the decision to allow the dissenting voices have their say (including presumably his own). Although the appearance at the time of the aftermath of the referendum was one of unity, Jenkins was to write nearly twenty years later that 'the handling of the European question by the leadership throughout the 1970's did more to cause the party's disasters of the 1980's than did any other issue'.¹⁷⁰ For Jenkins, the roots of the SDP grew out of the poisoned debates over Europe.

Tim Bale writes that it was the decision of Wilson to allow the 'agreement to differ' that was to give those who were to leave Labour for the Social Democrats the further incentive to leave a party that was only temporarily united.¹⁷¹ Ben Pimlott similarly suggests that Wilson's actions may well have sown the seeds of the building discontent that was to conclude with the breaking away and formation of the SDP and the sharp shift to the left.¹⁷² Colin Pilkington observed that the decision by Wilson to suspend cabinet responsibility in order to allow the opposing groups to fight the referendum without party considerations was only meant to be a temporary measure. The problem was that 'the significance of conventions within an unwritten constitution is that, if they are ignored once they can be ignored again if it is seen expedient to do so'. In other words, a minister's silence could no longer be counted on as being sacrosanct.¹⁷³ Yet these are perfectly acceptable views with the benefit of forty years' worth

¹⁶⁹ Peter Hennessey, *The Prime Minister: The Office and Its Holders Since 1945*, (London: Allen Lane, 2000) p.369

¹⁷⁰ Jenkins, *A Life at the Centre*, p.342

¹⁷¹ Tim Bale, 'Crimes and Misdemeanours: Managing Dissent in the Twentieth and Twenty-First Century Labour Party', in Brian Brivati, and Richard Heffernan (Editors), *The Labour Party: A Centennial History*, p.280

¹⁷² Pimlott, *Harold Wilson*, p.601

¹⁷³ Colin Pilkington, *Politics Today: Britain in the European Union Today (Second Edition)*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001), pp.97-98

of hindsight. To view his period in office through the prism of the period, to hold together a party that was now trying to balance an increasingly disenchanted right-wing and a radical left wing was a difficult enough undertaking to achieve - to do this alongside the first national referendum was even more of an impressive undertaking.

Callaghan and the end of Keynesianism

Despite keeping Labour together Wilson's legacy to his successor, James Callaghan, was a poisoned one. Callaghan's administration may not have faced the European dilemma as his predecessor had yet he was to face the problems of industrial militancy just as the left was to focus its attacks on the moderate nature of his Government. If it had lost the battle over European membership, the left could still have enforced pressure on a Government that no longer had a majority in the House of Commons. For them, the left had certainly not been silenced by the referendum and in spite of the referendum had not been routed. In the eyes of those on the Centre and Right the issues of militant CLP members bringing pressure to bear on the PLP remained.

With Wilson stepping down as Prime Minister, the ensuing leadership election lasted from 25 March until 5 April, requiring three ballots to determine the eventual successor. From the outset, the right failed to coalesce around a favoured candidate and fielded four of the six candidates that stood: Crosland, Jenkins, Healey and Callaghan. Michael Foot stood for the traditional Bevanite left with Tony Benn representing what was to become known as the Hard Left. Crosland finished last and was eliminated whilst Benn withdrew from the campaign. Taking Crosland's and Healey's votes from the PLP into account, and making the assumption that the same MPs would have voted for him as the sole candidate of the old Gaitskellite Right, Jenkins would have finished ahead of Callaghan and Foot and would have entered the second ballot in a commanding position. Whilst this would have seen the establishment of a supremely Social Democratic cabinet Jenkins would have faced the same problems as the man who was

to eventually succeed Wilson, namely finely balancing a party and indeed a Cabinet that was increasingly splintering.

In the event Jenkins also withdrew his candidacy with Foot, Callaghan and Healey going into the next round before Healey was eventually eliminated. With the representative of the traditional Right in Callaghan and the Soft Left in Foot, the party opted for Callaghan by a victory margin of 39 votes. If the Labour Right could have coalesced around a single candidate from the beginning such as Callaghan or Jenkins, then the margin of eventual victory could have been more convincing and send out a signal as to the continued direction for Labour. Instead the result provided the stark and visceral impression of a divided party.

On the announcement of his victory it was noticeable that one of the first appeals that Callaghan made was for unity and furthermore for the abolition of the Tribune and Manifesto groupings on the left and right respectively. Callaghan abhorred factionalism not just from a pragmatic perspective borne out of leading a minority Government but because he was instinctively devoted to the Labour Party, which he had been a member of since he was a youth. What was also notable was that Callaghan said what mattered to him was becoming party leader rather than prime minister. For Callaghan, whilst this was the pinnacle and being the patriotic-minded man that he was, being leader of the party he loved and worked for all his life was what was most important – and for Callaghan it had to be a united Labour Party.¹⁷⁴ After the years of in-fighting and public disputes that had disfigured the Wilson era, Callaghan's initial period in office was a startling contrast of near-amicable calm. As a candidate from the right of party in the form of Callaghan, who had burnished credentials due to his recent role as Foreign Secretary and the designated 'Keeper of the Flat Cap' due to his effective vetoing of the 'In Place of Strife' bill in the late 1960s, the party had selected a leader that could bridge the growing divide between right and left.

¹⁷⁴ Hoggart and Michie, *The Pact*, p.93

One of the more surprising promotions was the placing of Tony Crosland as Foreign Secretary. With Healey at the Treasury, Callaghan had in place formidable 'heavyweights' from the right of the party in the two most senior cabinet posts yet was weakened by the self-removal of consideration for a post other than Foreign Secretary by Roy Jenkins and in due course was to leave British politics subsequently becoming President of the European Commission. A significant voice from the Social Democratic wing of the party was thus removed.

The departure of Jenkins came at a time of perceived weakness of the revisionist cause within the Labour Party. Despite having written *Socialism Now* in 1974, Crosland had lost support on the right of the party due to his perceived ambivalence to the issue of Europe. Moreover, there was the suggestion that Crosland had effectively abandoned the cause of social liberalism as he became more self-identified with the working-classes and their 'values'. Anecdotes were recalled of Crosland disregarding 'questions, particularly libertarian ones and those relating to foreign policy, he brushed aside in this way, concentrating on the "gut" issues'.¹⁷⁵ Another recalled how Crosland and Jenkins supporters were perceived to have differences over 'the race question as they did on many libertarian issues'.¹⁷⁶ It is somewhat surprising to hear Crosland, who in 1956 had argued for greater social liberalism now apparently decrying race relations supporters apparently saying 'you people in NW1 make me sick with your libertarian values'.¹⁷⁷ For the observer of this exchange, to be a Jenkins supporter was to follow someone who 'was regarded as namby-pampy soft liberal who was out of touch with the real world, who wanted pornography, homosexuality and race equality,' whereas 'Croslanders felt they had a much closer link with working-class values'.¹⁷⁸ In crude terms, to be a Croslandite revisionist therefore was to be someone who understood the working-classes, to be a Jenkinsite was to be a metropolitan liberal.

¹⁷⁵ Peter Jenkins, quoted in Radhika Desai, *Intellectuals and Socialism*, p.138

¹⁷⁶ Anthony Lawrence QC, quoted in Radhika Desai, *Intellectuals and Socialism*, p.139

¹⁷⁷ Anthony Lawrence QC, quoted in Radhika Desai, *Intellectuals and Socialism*, p.139

¹⁷⁸ Anthony Lawrence QC, quoted in Radhika Desai, *Intellectuals and Socialism*, p.139

Marquand also noted that the economic difficulties the Labour Government meant that Crosland's aims were not being realised 'in short, no growth, no redistribution – and no redistribution, no revisionism.'¹⁷⁹ The IMF crisis of 1977 was to have a profound effect on the Labour Government and on the revisionists in particular. The introduction of counter-inflationary measures and the approval of swingeing cuts in return for loans from the International Monetary Fund was humiliating for Callaghan and for Crosland a source of desolation. Pannitch and Leys, having previously noted with derision Crosland's insistence that revisionism was still relevant in the 1970s, now noted how he was in a strange alliance with Tony Benn and Peter Shore on opposing the demands being set by the IMF and being pushed by Callaghan and Healey.¹⁸⁰ Crosland's insistence that the figures being touted by the Treasury as being flawed were not heeded and the falling in with cabinet responsibility must have been a huge blow. For Crosland, this was the post-war Consensus and the role of Social Democratic revisionists such as himself being abandoned in favour of Monetarism. As Marquand notes, 'he could see that the expenditure cuts demanded by the IMF and favoured by the Treasury made a mockery of all that he stood for'.¹⁸¹ This meant that Crosland was at odds with his contemporary and fellow revisionist Denis Healey who was in turn supported by Callaghan. As Giles Radice noted Crosland was supported by Roy Hattersley 'to the end' but in the end conceded.¹⁸² In due course, the economic situation was to improve and interest rates and inflation began to fall. Yet as Radice also noted, 'the IMF crisis also brought into doubt key elements of the post-war consensus – the Keynesian assumption that priority should be given to full employment and the welfare commitment to high levels of public spending'.¹⁸³ This was akin to the trauma of the collapse of the MacDonald Government - what was the purpose of the Social Democrats if the theory of growth and Keynesian economy were being

¹⁷⁹ Marquand, *The Progressive Dilemma*, p.172

¹⁸⁰ Leys and Pannitch, *The End of Parliamentary Socialism*, p126

¹⁸¹ Marquand, *The Progressive Dilemma*, p.175

¹⁸² Giles Radice, *Friends and Rivals: Crosland, Jenkins and Healey* (London: Little Brown, 2002), p.265

¹⁸³ Radice, *Friends and Rivals*, p.265

discredited and a Labour Government introducing cuts in public spending in the areas of welfare and education?

Crosland's premature death on 19 February 1977 was to rob the Labour Party of someone who could think critically and with intellectual force but also provided the philosophical grounding for the Labour right. If he had survived it is possible and likely that he would have swapped positions with Healey in the light of an improving economy but in any event the hole that Crosland left in terms of body of work and capacity for critical thinking was considerable.

On 23 March, Callaghan's Government survived a motion of no confidence thanks to the support of the Liberals and the Irish nationalist Social Democratic and Labour Party. This was to see Labour exist for the next 18 months on a hand-to-mouth basis. With the advent of the Lib-Lab Pact Callaghan was extended the time and room in which to manoeuvre. It also brought together some on the right of the party into regular contact with the Liberals which was to be remembered in the years to follow. In the short-term it also allowed Callaghan the time to decide if an early election was to be called. By the end of 1978, the recriminations over Callaghan's decision not to go to the polls in October were beginning to be overshadowed by the industrial action that was gathering pace. From a period of relative calm within the country after the turbulence of the IMF crisis and a small but significant lead in the opinion polls, Labour was to be battered by events it could not control but were held responsible for, in much the same way as suffered by Heath five years earlier. Appeals to the unions for wage restraint, the underpinning factor of the Social Contract, went unheeded and the year ended in the early turbulence of the 'Winter of Discontent'. As the Social Contract, which had been so delicately and painstakingly maintained by Wilson, began to unravel and strike action became widespread as a result of pay freezes introduced to stabilise the economy. This sequence of events, coupled with humiliating IMF crisis further damaged the Callaghan Government in the eyes of the electorate.

Defeat and Blame

Unlike in 1970 the opinion polling and private mood of many within Labour meant that the defeat of 1979 had been expected. Tony Benn, writing in his diaries on 20 April, said, 'my solemn assessment now is that Mrs Thatcher will win this Election with an overall majority'.¹⁸⁴ Whilst some within the party had been fully expecting to lose this was not to say that the defeat was to be any more acceptable. Giles Radice, whilst generally supportive, blamed Callaghan, Healey and Foot for the defeat in 1979 for prevaricating in going to the polls in 1978¹⁸⁵. Austin Mitchell similarly thought that had Callaghan gone to the polls in 1978 Labour would have won as the largest party – 'if Jim had hung on and put the election back as many in retrospect think we would have finished ahead of the Tories, certainly'.¹⁸⁶ The rationale for a Labour Government to be elected on account of the relationship with the trade union movement was seemingly rendered as redundant and a fallacy, ultimately destroyed by the events of the subsequent industrial action across the country. The old certainties of Labour being able to rely on its core vote had been steadily challenged since 1970 and the impact of the loss of the aspirational working-class vote was being keenly felt.

The Conservatives had managed to win a significant number of working-class voters from Labour. This was particularly galling for those both within and outside the party who had pushed for similar policies which were to subsequently prove popular with the electorate. There had been those who had been supportive of the idea of the sale of council houses to tenants, with Bernard Donaghue noting that Harold Wilson had been particularly supportive back in 1976, only for the idea to be beached on the sands of opposition from within the party. Those opposed to the sale came from both sides of the party, notably from the then Environment Secretary Tony Crosland. The former Political Editor of the *Guardian*, Francis Boyd, noted that such appeals to aspiration and security after a period of tumult were very

¹⁸⁴ Tony Benn, *Against the Tide: Diaries, 1973-77* (London: Arrow Books, 1991), p.489

¹⁸⁵ Interview with Giles Radice, 28 November 2012

¹⁸⁶ Interview with Austin Mitchell, 4 November 2014

attractive. For Boyd 'it is the psychological effect that matters. If the electors feel that things would be easier under the Tories they may, even though normally Labour voters, vote Tory'.¹⁸⁷ It was perhaps an obvious observation to make but it was nevertheless pertinent and borne out by the Conservative victory which was to follow. As the *Guardian* leader was to note, 'it is hard to resist the conclusion that the have-nots, the have-littles and the have-problems bent only slightly to the wind of change whilst the have-plentys and the want-mores were eager to clip along with the Conservatives'.¹⁸⁸

Boyd had observed that the 'febrile economy of the country' had forced the country to 'face the future'. The choice for the electorate for which of the two main parties would be best suited to bringing stability was also affected by the emergence of 'various groups...that the familiar party battle for mastery through control of the House of Commons means nothing to the electors'. For Boyd these groups consisted of the younger voters for whom 'politicians speak without a cutting edge', and the older voters for whom 'the promise land...seems always to be receding'.¹⁸⁹

What was now seemingly expected was that with the onset of defeat the Labour Party would quickly fall into a series of internal battles and recriminations as was the tradition set in the 1930s and 1950s. External commentators were quick to note this inevitability even as the last of the votes were being counted

It is now inevitable that within a very short time the two wings of the Labour Party will begin the preliminary manoeuvring for a leadership contest with the Left arguing that defeat is traceable to orthodox monetarist economic policies, to expenditure cuts

¹⁸⁷ Francis Boyd, 'A Tory Arcadia the second time around?', *The Guardian*, 16 April 1979, p.7

¹⁸⁸ 'The lady and the people', *The Guardian*, 5 May 1979, p.12

¹⁸⁹ 'The lady and the people', *The Guardian*, 5 May 1979, p.12

enforced by the International Monetary Fund, and to genuine failure to tackle unemployment.¹⁹⁰

It did not require anyone from outside the party to observe that the arguments as to why the defeat occurred would begin in earnest. Giles Radice, speaking at the Special Parliamentary Labour Party meeting of 16 May 1979, said that the defeat was the party's worst since 1931 and this had been caused by the continued loss of skilled workers voting for the party since 1970, which constituted some half a million voters. Radice's assertion that Labour had to recognise the rapid move to a more technological age where the areas of heavy industry were becoming increasingly obsolete was one that had obvious resonance on the areas where such industries were mainly based, industries which were highly unionised and contained the largest numbers of members. Labour had to be seen to be the party that was a modernising force, much as it was in the 1960s. At that time though, it was seen as stolid and conservative in the face of industrial change.

Radice, whilst not offering any specific solutions, said that the party had to 'listen, learn and discuss' and 'show that we are a radical party. We must recognise the impact of new technology, the facelessness of bureaucracy in both public and private sectors'. Radice also added a further caveat, minding the party that it must not 'quarrel amongst ourselves but must capture the hearts of 2 million people'.¹⁹¹

Yet the appeal for a period of enquiry in an atmosphere of collegiate consensus would not be heeded for very long. For Healey, there was to be no such pandering to introspection or acceptance that the right was to blame for the failures of the 1974-79 Government. As can be expected, Healey in his memoirs was to provide a strongly revisionist and characteristically

¹⁹⁰ Ian Aitken, 'Thatcher faced with ruling a divided nation', *The Guardian*, 4 May 1979, <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/1979/may/04/electionspast.past>, [accessed 29 April 2015]

¹⁹¹ Minutes of a Special Parliamentary Labour Party Meeting held on Wednesday 16 May 1979 at 11.30 am in Committee Room 14, p. 2, National Archive Papers, accessed 17 April 2015

combative defence against the left's accusation that the party lost the election due to the Callaghan Government's lack of socialism. For Healey, the apportioning of blame for the defeat is laid squarely on the unions for their failure to adhere to wage restraint and the 'Winter of Discontent' of 1978-79.¹⁹² Tony Benn noted that this was the feeling of the leadership in general when he recorded Callaghan as saying on 9 May 1979: 'We lost the Election because people didn't get their dustbins emptied, because commuters were angry about train disruptions and because of too much union power. That's all there is to it'.¹⁹³ Austin Mitchell was even stronger, accusing the unions of breaking the agreed policy on wage restraint and stating that they had 'behaved stupidly and betrayed us'.¹⁹⁴ If viewed from a Bennite perspective, this underlined the managerialist tendency that had underpinned the thinking of the last Labour administration, boiled down to base practicalities and the abandonment of policies agreed by Conference. For others, such as Robert Mellish who was to underline the point forcibly, it was a statement of the electoral reality that had been delivered onto the Labour Movement.

In due course, Benn informed the press that he had decided not to stand for the shadow cabinet. When asked by Callaghan the following day as to why, Benn said that he wanted to be able to debate policy and the matter of party democracy. 'If the Government were a bit more responsive to Conference, Conference wouldn't pass such extreme resolutions',¹⁹⁵ Benn noted an argument that he was to have with Michael Foot on 13 May, again on the issue of party democracy, which Foot retorted would be 'a recipe for the keeping the Party in the wilderness for twenty years,' and surmised that Foot was waiting to become leader until Peter Shore was available. Benn also offered the opinion, 'When you get the so-called left of the

¹⁹² Healey, *The Time of My Life*, p.466

¹⁹³ Tony Benn, *Conflicts of Interest: Diaries, 1977-80* (London: Arrow Books, 1991), p.499

¹⁹⁴ Interview with Austin Mitchell, 4 November 2014

¹⁹⁵ Benn, *Conflicts of Interest: Diaries, 1977-80*, p.501

Party so far to the right, then does that mean that there is no support in the country for radical views?'¹⁹⁶

For the time being, Benn kept his counsel. In due course, Ian Aitken's expectation of the Labour Left's attack on the failure of the Callaghan Government in adhering to monetarism and expenditure cuts was quick to come to pass. One of the first examples came on 6 June 1979 from the Militant-aligned President of the Bakers Union Terry O'Neill, who attacked the Labour leadership at his Union's annual conference.¹⁹⁷ He said "'We have seen a so-called Labour Government try to restrict people on ridiculously low wages to 6 per cent rises.'"¹⁹⁸

Yet at first the anticipated advance of the Left did not seem to make much progress as was underlined by the elections to the shadow cabinet in June 1979. Denis Healey finished top of the polling with 153 votes and the majority of the roster was completed by those from the Labour right. 129. Only three members of the Tribune group were elected, John Silkin, Stan Orme and Albert Booth. For John Desborough of the *Daily Mirror*, Healey was the clear favourite to succeed Callaghan, but added the caveat that, 'Mr. Healey is 61 and the longer Mr. Callaghan stays, the longer will be the odds against Mr. Healey'.¹⁹⁹

Callaghan was expected to stand down at one point but had been re-elected unanimously by the PLP on 9 May 1979, so the prospect of this occurring was not immediately evident. Whilst elected via acclamation, it seemed that some had wished for Callaghan to step down quickly in order to pave the way for Healey. Radice, having previously felt that the leadership was to blame for not going to the polls in 1978 when the party was faring better reflected that Callaghan should have stepped down after he lost in 1979.²⁰⁰ As it was, Callaghan was to stay on for another year in order to bring some stability to the party after the defeat. There was

¹⁹⁶ Benn, *Conflicts of Interest: Diaries, 1977-80*, p.504

¹⁹⁷ Now the Bakers, Food and Allied Workers Union (BFAWU)

¹⁹⁸ 'Mirror Briefing: Bakers Hit Out', *Daily Mirror*, 4 June 1979, p.2

¹⁹⁹ John Desborough, 'Healey Tops Shadow Team', *Daily Mirror*, 15 June 1979, p.2

²⁰⁰ Interview with Giles Radice, 28 November 2012

certainly a feeling of a need for stability for a Parliamentary Labour Party demoralised after the election defeat. Clive Soley, recently elected as MP for Hammersmith North, remembered remarking publicly that 'sitting in the (House of Commons) Tea Room with Labour MPs was like sitting in a Battle of Britain crew room after a particular bad sortie because they would all be talking about who didn't come back'.²⁰¹

In June 1979, two figures on the Left of the party were to state how they saw the future direction of Labour. For Eric Heffer, Labour had to 'become more than an electoral machine at electoral time...we must be a party deeply-rooted among people in which they turn to when they are in trouble'.²⁰² For Ron Hayward Labour had lost 'all those sections of society which we used to claim as our own,' to which he referred to as council house tenants, trade unionists and the young.²⁰³ Both analyses would not have been discounted by those on the Right even if the policies of the two groups were so opposite.

On 21 July 1979, Callaghan's deputy, Michael Foot, gave a speech at the Durham Miners 96th Annual Gala, in which he made a plea for unity and in doing so evoked historical memory of a previous attempt to change the party after election defeat:

It would be tragic and unforgiveable if at such a moment we turned aside from this supreme task to tear ourselves in pieces if we supposed what is needed is a constitutional wrangle within the Labour Party. That was the great folly which Hugh Gaitskell committed after the electoral defeat of 1959. I trust we can escape a repetition of such a dangerous diversion today.²⁰⁴

²⁰¹ Interview with Clive Soley, 18 November 2014

²⁰² Rosemary Collins, 'Trade unions to meet party leaders', *The Guardian*, 25 June 1979, p.21

²⁰³ Collins, 'Trade unions to meet party leaders', *The Guardian*, 25 June 1979, p.21

²⁰⁴ Central Manchester, People's History Museum Archives, Michael Foot Papers, MF/L27/6, *Extract from a speech to be made by Rt. Hon. Michael Foot M.P. (Ebbw Vale), at the Durham Miners' 96th Annual Gala on Saturday morning, 21 July 1979*

The previous discussion with Benn on the matter of party democracy had clearly made an impact. That this had been floated on a number of occasions by Benn was widely known. But now, with the absence of power, it was clear that the opportunity for an attempt to bring in any changes was opening up. In quick succession by July 1979 leading figures on the right, soft left and hard left spoke out on the matter of constitutional changes within the party, although on 25 July, Callaghan received a letter from the Manifesto group of MPs which strongly set out their opposition to the suggested changes.

On 18 September 1979 Tony Benn wrote in his diary: 'Undoubtedly the right in the Labour Party are considering a breakaway, which is what Jim hinted at when he talked about the disaffiliating. I don't rule out the possibility that we might lose a chunk of the right, but they wouldn't have a future'.²⁰⁵

Benn's nonchalance at a possible breakaway could have been at the thought that such an event may not occur. For the previous thirty years Labour had endured excoriating battles yet had still managed to remain united in body if not in spirit. Benn's oft-mentioned description of the party being a broad church of opinion had to include the Social Democrats who were now the target of vitriol by his supporters. For the right of the party, the changes that they were so opposed to, the mandatory re-selection of MPs and the drafting and control of the manifesto to be decided by the NEC, were presented and passed at the fractious Conference discussed in the previous chapter. For some of those on the right, the desire to remain in such a church, broad or otherwise, was beginning to pall. Such sentiments were to be enhanced by the proposition of a commission of inquiry into the party's defeat, an inquiry many on the right felt would be anathema.

²⁰⁵ Benn, *Conflicts of Interest: Diaries, 1977-80*, p.537

The Road to Bishop's Stortford

The original request for a Commission of Enquiry was originally mooted by trade union leaders shortly after the election defeat in order to debate the party structure, its democracy and its increasingly precarious finances. For Jon Bloomfield, writing in *Marxism Today*, the call for an enquiry (or inquiry, as Bloomfield referred to it) was of genuine intent but a mechanism to be sought to be used for other purposes by the party leadership: 'Whatever the genuine union concern about the party's depleted organisation and finances (which there is), objectively the commission was a device by which Callaghan, supported by Michael Foot, sought to stall the Left's advance and halt the reforms'.²⁰⁶ There is probably some truth in this observation, as for Callaghan the opportunity to stymie any major changes to the party's internal organisation was one that he would have gratefully taken. This was certainly the view taken by the National Executive and their decision to block an enquiry by fourteen votes to twelve at a fractious meeting which took place on 25 July 1979. This led to Dave Basnett of the General and Municipal Workers Union to denounce the decision as 'a deliberate affront to the foremost supporters of the Labour Party...the executive (sic) will have to re-think its attitude - and very quickly'.²⁰⁷

Callaghan's strong bond with the Labour Party was such that he would not have wanted to see anything implemented that would upset the delicate balances that existed within the party. Even after the traumas of the Winter of Discontent, Callaghan was hopeful that an enquiry called for by the general secretaries was to be a means of ensuring that unity within the movement could be re-established and the status quo maintained. Yet for someone as astute as Callaghan was for understanding the political weather, it was to be a great misjudgement.

²⁰⁶ Jon Bloomfield, 'Labour's Long Haul', *Marxism Today*, 6 December 1980, p.8, http://banmarchive.org.uk/collections/mt/index_frame.htm, [accessed 25 May 2014]

²⁰⁷ 'Fury of union bosses', Goodman, *Daily Mirror*, 26 July 1979, p.2

On reading the official publication of the Commission of Enquiry when it eventually came out its unassuming and dry tone, reading almost as a set of financial accounts, itemised down to the levies to be paid by members belied the rancour that its compilation caused. Yet the meeting of the party leadership and the ensuing fallout that followed highlighted how the findings transcended the more prosaic areas of party finance. The strength and influence of the PLP was being directly challenged as a consequence of Conference and was to be confirmed by the findings of the enquiry. The ability to be the sole body which elects the party leadership was being removed from PLP. For some this was the chance to correct an historical oversight of the Hardie era, for others it would be the cementing of the control of the CLPs and the National Executive over decision making.

There were already suggestions for the party to unite ahead of the enquiry taking place, reflecting the obvious divisions which already existed but were in danger of widening further once it had completed. Roy Hattersley gave a speech to a rally in Cambridge on 20 October 1979 in which whilst acknowledging the need for changes to Labour's constitution, stated that the party could not 'afford winners and losers' and that 'if either side in these essential arguments looks for total victory the Labour Party will by the end of the year be weaker, not stronger, than when the year began'.²⁰⁸ Calling for accommodation of 'the vanquished,' Hattersley said that he hoped that the determination that he felt in keeping Labour united would be something 'we could all pledge ourselves to',²⁰⁹ but again such entreaties were to be ignored. This was perhaps to be expected when Hattersley himself had, at the same rally, made the suggestion that Tony Benn should have resigned as a Minister during the last Government. Even if his contention that 'if the old policies seemed right at the time we applied them, six months is far too short a period for serious review of deeply held convictions',²¹⁰ was

²⁰⁸ 'Hattersley wants changes and unity', *The Observer*, 21 October 1979, p.2

²⁰⁹ 'Hattersley wants changes and unity', *The Observer*, 21 October 1979, p.2

²¹⁰ Ian Aitken, 'Hattersley hints that Benn should have quit', *The Guardian*, 22 October 1979, p. 26

one which could be applied across the party, such rhetoric was not helpful in reducing the increasingly febrile atmosphere.

The debate on the actual composition of the members of the Commission was in itself a controversial issue. Bloomfield again noted that 'The wrangle over the composition of the Commission created the impression that what was at stake was primarily a factional inner-party battle not a dispute over democratic reform'.²¹¹ It was to be both of these things. At the NEC meeting of 24 October the vote was acrimoniously passed that the composition of the Commission would be five general secretaries of the Trade Unions, five representatives of the NEC and the party Leader, Deputy Leader and Norman Atkinson and Alex Kitson in their roles as Party Treasurer and Vice-Chairman respectively.²¹² For Benn, this was 'a great victory' in that it represented a 'left-balance...potentially 10-4 in our favour',²¹³ which signalled the worst fears of those on the right who saw the Commission as a means of reinforcing the grip that the left was steadily increasing.

On 31 October 1979 the PLP met to discuss the organisation of the Enquiry and its terms of reference. The minutes of the meeting show that the discussion was to split down familiar lines – those on the right of the party supported further representation of the PLP, with those on the left feeling the representation was already set by members of the PLP being members of the NEC. Yet as can be seen from the minutes many of those MPs present felt that a compromise motion could be reached but similarly there was to be a solidifying of positions held by those who maintained that their positions were paramount. On this issue, therefore, the Centre Right and the Bennite Left became entrenched.

The Chair of the meeting, Fred Willey, noted that the motion being put forward by the Parliamentary Committee was that a request would be made to the NEC to discuss further MP

²¹¹ Bloomfield, 'Labour's Long Haul', *Marxism Today*, 6 December 1980, p.9

²¹² Benn, *Conflicts of Interest: Diaries, 1977-80*, pp.550-551

²¹³ Benn, *Conflicts of Interest: Diaries, 1977-80*, p.551

representation on the Enquiry other than those attending as members of the NEC. Observing that that Labour was 'a troika of the Labour Party, the Trade Unions and the Parliamentary Labour Party,' Willey said it was important that representations were made 'from all three of these historic parts of the Movement'.²¹⁴ Willey added that the Parliamentary Committee believed that 'strong representation' from the PLP 'would avoid future disputes and confrontation'.²¹⁵

An MP who submitted a counter amendment, Norman Buchan, MP for West Renfrewshire, submitted a counter amendment saying that it was the Constituency Parties, the Trade Unions and the Co-operative Party that were the founders of the Labour Movement and that 'it was only in the context of the recent arguments over parliamentary democracy that the PLP had emerged as a separate entity'.²¹⁶ Adding that although he deplored the treatment the PLP had received at the recent Conference, he offered that a split in the party could come about by accident 'as well as design'. Buchan added that he had also been told that the Enquiry Committee was unrepresentative as it was skewed heavily in favour of the PLP and did not contain anyone from the CLPs and that this in itself was unrepresentative. As such, if all parts of the Party were not represented, Buchan 'saw no reason why the PLP should necessarily be'.²¹⁷ This was an explicit challenge to the perceived unchallenged hegemony that the Parliamentary Labour Party exerted, something which Buchan had suggested had been a relatively recent development.

Supporting this amendment whilst attempting to strike a more ameliorative note, Frank Hooley said that he took the 'unfashionable' view that various parts of the Labour Party worked

²¹⁴ Minutes of a Special Parliamentary Labour Party Meeting held on Wednesday 31 October 1979 at 11.30 am in Committee Room 14, p.2, National Archive Papers, accessed 17 April 2015

²¹⁵ Minutes of a Special Parliamentary Labour Party Meeting held on Wednesday 31 October 1979 at 11.30 am in Committee Room 14, p.2, National Archive Papers, accessed 17 April 2015

²¹⁶ Minutes of a Special Parliamentary Labour Party Meeting held on Wednesday 31 October 1979 at 11.30 am in Committee Room 14, p.2, National Archive Papers, accessed 17 April 2015

²¹⁷ Minutes of a Special Parliamentary Labour Party Meeting held on Wednesday 31 October 1979 at 11.30 am in Committee Room 14, p.2, National Archive Papers, accessed 17 April 2015

together, what he referred to as 'intra-penetration'²¹⁸. Hooley said that those on the Parliamentary committee were against those who had been chosen and that it was difficult to appease everyone as 'some wanted a hand-picked Manifesto Group, others a hand-picked Tribune Group'²¹⁹. Hooley added that the NEC was elected by the whole party movement and that the 'Enquiry was not one into the PLP but into the Party by the Party'.²²⁰

Alex Lyons of the Tribunate Left proffered the opinion on that he 'preferred the idea of One Party' and according to the minutes 'urged colleagues to avoid a "Gaitskellite" collision and reminded them that the power of the Party lay with the activists'.²²¹ This direct reference to the widely-viewed mistake that Gaitskell had made in trying to remove Clause IV in 1960 was also an attack on the perceived intransigence of the Right towards the moves to greater party democracy. Lyons gave the cautionary rejoinder that neither MPs nor Trade Unions could reverse the decisions which had been made at Conference, otherwise activists would seek even more power.²²² This seemed to encapsulate the guarded approach of the Soft Left, being not necessarily supportive of those on the Right but also wary of the support that the CLPD had within the grassroots.

One of the leading members of the Social Democratic right, Robert McLennan, struck an antagonistic note saying that 'the Party was split on this issue and it would be self-deceiving to see it otherwise'.²²³ Using the rhetoric used by Roy Hattersley in his Cambridge speech, (speaking in terms of 'vanquished and victors'), McLennan adopted a line of attack utilised by David Owen in his previous speeches and said that the role of the PLP in the Party was an

²¹⁸ Minutes of a Special Parliamentary Labour Party Meeting held on Wednesday 31 October 1979 at 11.30 am in Committee Room 14, p.3, National Archive Papers, accessed 17 April 2015

²¹⁹ Minutes of a Special Parliamentary Labour Party Meeting held on Wednesday 31 October 1979 at 11.30 am in Committee Room 14, p.3, National Archive Papers, accessed 17 April 2015

²²⁰ Minutes of a Special Parliamentary Labour Party Meeting held on Wednesday 31 October 1979 at 11.30 am in Committee Room 14, p.3, National Archive Papers, accessed 17 April 2015

²²¹ Minutes of a Special Parliamentary Labour Party Meeting held on Wednesday 31 October 1979 at 11.30 am in Committee Room 14, p.3, National Archive Papers, accessed 17 April 2015

²²² Minutes of a Special Parliamentary Labour Party Meeting held on Wednesday 31 October 1979 at 11.30 am in Committee Room 14, p.3, National Archive Papers, accessed 17 April 2015

²²³ Minutes of a Special Parliamentary Labour Party Meeting held on Wednesday 31 October 1979 at 11.30 am in Committee Room 14, p.4, National Archive Papers, accessed 17 April 2015

issue and that this was underlined by Clause IV (1): 'to organise and maintain in Parliament and in the country a Political Labour Party'.²²⁴ McLennan said it would be constitutionally improper of the NEC to set up an Enquiry without paying attention to Clause IV. It was also 'nationally important' because MPs were not only answerable to the NEC and to Conference, but also 'to the people who vote for them'.²²⁵ If the NEC really wanted to widen the membership as it had been pushing for, McLennan queried, did it have 'the breadth of vision to do so'?²²⁶ Ramping the rhetoric even further, McLennan had added that this had become a 'make or break issue'.²²⁷

Robert Mellish was to adopt the Callaghan line of debunking criticism and asking 'colleagues to nail the lie that the last Labour Government was a disaster', said that that he had been in the Labour Party all his life, 'since the age of 14'.²²⁸ This was also a rebuke to a more recent statement made by Stan Thorne at the PLP meeting of 23 October in which he had contended that if the decisions of Conference had been adhered to by the last Government then the Conservatives would have been defeated – in other words, continuing the assertion that the Callaghan Government was insufficiently socialist.²²⁹ Mellish was to warn his fellow MPs to 'watch what you were doing', observing that when Labour had fought over policy in the past it had been relevant to the issues in the country at the time and that 'this had strengthened them'.²³⁰ At this point the party was not arguing about matters which were of concern to the electorate and as such were 'in danger, like the Liberals, of destroying themselves by internal

²²⁴ Minutes of a Special Parliamentary Labour Party Meeting held on Wednesday 31 October 1979 at 11.30 am in Committee Room 14, p.4, National Archive Papers, accessed 17 April 2015

²²⁵ Minutes of a Special Parliamentary Labour Party Meeting held on Wednesday 31 October 1979 at 11.30 am in Committee Room 14, p.4, National Archive Papers, accessed 17 April 2015

²²⁶ Minutes of a Special Parliamentary Labour Party Meeting held on Wednesday 31 October 1979 at 11.30 am in Committee Room 14, p.4, National Archive Papers, accessed 17 April 2015

²²⁷ Minutes of a Special Parliamentary Labour Party Meeting held on Wednesday 31 October 1979 at 11.30 am in Committee Room 14, p.4, National Archive Papers, accessed 17 April 2015

²²⁸ Minutes of a Special Parliamentary Labour Party Meeting held on Wednesday 31 October 1979 at 11.30 am in Committee Room 14, p.4, National Archive Papers, accessed 17 April 2015

²²⁹ Minutes of a Special Parliamentary Labour Party Meeting held on Tuesday 23 October 1979 at 5.30 pm in Committee Room 10, p.3, National Archive Papers, accessed 17 April 2015

²³⁰ Minutes of a Special Parliamentary Labour Party Meeting held on Tuesday 23 October 1979 at 5.30 pm in Committee Room 10, p.4, National Archive Papers, accessed 17 April 2015

feuding'.²³¹ The matters the Enquiry had to concern itself with, Mellish said, were the areas of party finance and membership as it 'had never been so bad', adding that for many parts of the South of England were now 'Tory to a man'.²³²

Jack Ashley, who also came from the right of the party, ironically observed that Labour 'was always asking the country to practise good industrial relations and yet the conflict in the PLP was an example of bad industrial relations'. Ashley said that the Party Conference had made three major errors in that they had failed to recognise that the PLP was the only alternative Government and that 'if they damaged and humiliated the PLP they did the same to the Movement as a whole'.²³³ The second point was that when activists at Conference denigrated MPs 'when they had not long before spent several weeks campaigning for them' was seen as hypocritical by the electorate. Finally, Ashley said that members tended to believe that whilst they were in opposition they could win the next election by default because of the expectation of Conservative failure. Ashley gloomily concluded that 'a new spirit of co-operation was needed within the Party or the present bitterness would last for many years'.²³⁴

As could be expected, Eric Heffer took a typically combative view in opposing the motion and said that 'the mass media' had presented a view of the NEC trying to create an 'Eastern European state, riding roughshod over the Party', adding that this was a 'downright lie'.²³⁵ Heffer said that 'it was not a clash between left and right' and correctly noted that the Enquiry had been proposed by Trade Union leaders, tartly observing that if it had not been for the NEC there would have been no PLP representation at all. Heffer said that the task of the Enquiry was similar to that put forward by Mellish: to put the finances on a sound footing, to enquire

²³¹ Minutes of a Special Parliamentary Labour Party Meeting held on Tuesday 23 October 1979 at 5.30 pm in Committee Room 10, p.4, National Archive Papers, accessed 17 April 2015

²³² Minutes of a Special Parliamentary Labour Party Meeting held on Tuesday 23 October 1979 at 5.30 pm in Committee Room 10, p.4, National Archive Papers, accessed 17 April 2015

²³³ Minutes of a Special Parliamentary Labour Party Meeting held on Tuesday 23 October 1979 at 5.30 pm in Committee Room 10, p.4, National Archive Papers, accessed 17 April 2015

²³⁴ Minutes of a Special Parliamentary Labour Party Meeting held on Tuesday 23 October 1979 at 5.30 pm in Committee Room 10, p.4, National Archive Papers, accessed 17 April 2015

²³⁵ Minutes of a Special Parliamentary Labour Party Meeting held on Tuesday 23 October 1979 at 5.30 pm in Committee Room 10, p.5, National Archive Papers, accessed 17 April 2015

into who made the biggest contribution to party funds (which Heffer said was the CLPs and not the Trade Unions); and to look into the disparity between membership figures - why, for instance, did his constituency party have 10,000 members and some only 150?²³⁶

Callaghan characteristically tried to conclude the proceedings by once again appealing for conciliation and unity. Callaghan said that Heffer was right to point out that the Enquiry's main tasks would be to examine finance and membership. Callaghan added that problems had arisen because of what was termed 'a confusion' about the function of both the PLP and the NEC. Callaghan added that during his time in Government he had found going to the NEC "purgatory", accusing the NEC of not carrying out 'its proper function which was that of the organisation of the Party'. Callaghan then observed that everyone within the party was an activist as far as he was concerned and said that his issue was about the question of the matter of the choosing of a candidate and that the issue of entryism was a very real one, noting that it allowed what he referred to as the 'bedsitter brigade' to be in a position to select or reject a candidate.²³⁷

Callaghan finished his summing up by saying that as Leader neither side, Left or Right, could win a General Election without the other. He would recommend that asking the PLP to support the Parliamentary Committee motion as it 'sought a broader representation of the people of the country.' Callaghan said he believed 'that socialism was still about justice and equality and that was what he joined the party for and what he remained in it for'.²³⁸ Tony Benn was to write in his diary that he felt that Callaghan had spoken 'passionately' and noted approvingly

²³⁶ Minutes of a Special Parliamentary Labour Party Meeting held on Tuesday 23 October 1979 at 5.30 pm in Committee Room 10, p.4, National Archive Papers, accessed 17 April 2015 and Benn, *Conflicts of Interest: Diaries, 1977-80*, p.553 – the archive shows that there was an original transcription error which corrected the number to 10,000 from 101,000.

²³⁷ Minutes of a Special Parliamentary Labour Party Meeting held on Tuesday 23 October 1979 at 5.30 pm in Committee Room 10, p.6, National Archive Papers, accessed 17 April 2015

²³⁸ Minutes of a Special Parliamentary Labour Party Meeting held on Tuesday 23 October 1979 at 5.30 pm in Committee Room 10, p.6, National Archive Papers, accessed 17 April 2015

that the latter had seen himself as 'peacemaker'.²³⁹ That the main motion was carried was a minor victory for Callaghan and the Right but this was to be of temporary respite.

However, this was not an end to an already protracted process just to decide upon the composition of the Commission's membership. On 27 January 1980, the General Secretary of the Amalgamated Union of Engineering Workers, Sir John Boyd, was in danger of being forced to withdraw as one of the five Union representatives due to a recent operation having taken place. The decision to replace him with the left-wing Deputy Secretary of the TGWU, Alex Kitson, was a bone of contention yet the report of the rumoured boycott of the Commission was dismissed as the plans of 'middle-class right-wing intellectuals who are a mirror image of the Looney Left,' by otherwise sympathetic right-wing backbench MPs.²⁴⁰

The task that Callaghan faced was compounded by the fact that both the left and the right were attacking and counter-attacking and the fault-lines were ever more widening. On 9 June 1980, David Owen, William Rodgers and Shirley Williams sent an open letter to *The Times* on the issue of Europe, directly rebuking the decision of Conference to commit to leaving the Common Market. As Crewe and King noted, Rodgers was reluctant to use Europe as a means to decry the party's left-wing policy stances as it may otherwise alienate those on the right of the party who were either agnostic on the matter of membership or otherwise opposed.²⁴¹ Crewe and King do not provide examples of those who were anti-Market but this could include senior shadow cabinet member Peter Shore, whereas those who were agnostic included Callaghan himself and Healey. In any event, such considerations were lost on Shore, who replied sharply to the pro-Marketeers that they were 'foolish'.²⁴²

²³⁹ Benn, *Conflicts of Interest: Diaries, 1977-80*, p.553

²⁴⁰ Ian Aitken, 'New headache for Labour's fraught inquiry', *The Guardian*, 28 January 1980, p.22

²⁴¹ Ivor Crewe and Anthony King, *SDP: The Birth, Life, and Death of the Social Democratic Party* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), p.43

²⁴² John Desborough, 'Shore raps the big EEC feud', *Daily Mirror*, 6 June 1980, p.2

The Commission of Inquiry was a painfully protracted affair that was to culminate in a particularly fraught and acrimonious convening of the Commission members at Bishop's Stortford on the weekend of 14 June 1980. Callaghan and the Committee members held talks on the findings based on the evidence submitted and it quickly descended into heated argument. Joyce Gould, who alongside Party Chairman Ron Hayward was one of the designated Secretariat of the Commission, recalled the rancour of the meetings that took place:

It was a disaster...it was very hard for us as officials trying to conduct something against this terrible, terrible background of dissent and people being rude to each other...it was an example of the distrust that everyone had of each other. ²⁴³

The Commission of Enquiry voted to approve the submission of a new electoral college for electing the party leadership and also on the matter of the mandatory reselection of MPs. Despite the protestations of both Callaghan and Michael Foot, the motion was carried for submission to the next party conference. On 5 July 1980, Callaghan made a strongly worded attack on the findings of the Commission in relation to the two most contentious issues. Yet in spite of such comments, both Callaghan and Healey were to face the opprobrium of Owen, Williams and Rodgers for not providing more resistance to the proposals. Bishop's Stortford was to sharpen the profiles of the dissenting voices of the Enquiry and by the time of the next Party Conference, the so-called 'Gang of Three' were to become ever more visible in the public domain.

For Healey, it was a bitter experience and one that the party was to suffer badly from as a result, making the contention that the Commission of Enquiry was the beginning of the crystallisation of the future breakaway. 'It was Bishop's Stortford which caused the conception of the Social Democratic Party, although its birth took place, appropriately enough, nine

²⁴³ Interview with Joyce Gould, 12 December 2012

months later'.²⁴⁴ Healey states that the reason he did not join the Manifesto Group's attack against Bishop's Stortford was because it would have been an attack against Callaghan who was still very popular in the country.

Callaghan continued to be the lightning rod for resentment by both sides of the party. The sense felt by Owen, Rodgers and Williams was one of betrayal towards Callaghan after Bishop's Stortford in spite of the changes and had tried to convince them to be implemented. Surprisingly, Callaghan's own memoirs do not really touch on this period, with only a three page Postscript in which he states his resentment at accusations of 'betrayal' by the left of the party (the quotation marks are Callaghan's). Considering his painful experiences leading Labour after 1979, it is perhaps surprising for Callaghan to be so reticent.²⁴⁵ Callaghan states that 'this is a memoir, not a history, and some things must remain untouched'²⁴⁶ and perhaps his wish was to not re-open still relatively fresh and bitter divisions at a time of a general election (as the original publication came out in 1987), but it is surprising that Callaghan did not wish to examine this final period of his leadership in order to provide more of a defence to his critics on both the left and the right.

The perceived failure of Callaghan with the Commission of Enquiry was to present the 'Gang of Three' with another opportunity to highlight their increasing unease with the left-ward trajectory of the party. Their increasingly strident bellicosity was returned in kind via the press. On 2 August 1980, the *Daily Mirror* published a rebuke from the now former Party Chairman Frank Allaun who called on the three to resign. For Allaun the three were making a direct challenge to Labour which should not be countenanced and that 'in attacking the National Executive the three Right-wingers are attacking the party'.²⁴⁷ For Joan Lestor it was a simple

²⁴⁴ Healey, *The Time of My Life*, p. 474

²⁴⁵ James Callaghan, *Time and Chance*, (London: Fontana Press, 1988), p.567

²⁴⁶ Callaghan, *Time and Chance*, p.567

²⁴⁷ Mark Dowdney, 'Left Attack "Rebels"', *The Daily Mirror*, 2 August 1980, p.2

matter and advised that those people who 'find themselves totally out of keeping with the majority view in the Labour Party then they must work hard to change or leave'.²⁴⁸

On 4 October, after the announcement of Callaghan's standing down as party leader and the election of his successor under the existing rules, David Owen gave a speech in which he denounced the 'shambles' of the Commission of Inquiry. Decrying the abandonment of the election of the leadership by the PLP and the non-adoption of one-member-one-vote, Owen said that the 'Bishop's Stortford compromise over an electoral college was a tragic error. It conceded a principle, a legitimate, proven democratic Parliamentary procedure, for a "mess of pottage."'²⁴⁹

Despair and Defection

As the first year of the new decade came to an end the right of the party was now effectively split. By January 1981 the Limehouse Declaration would see the now 'gang of four' taking the coldly-proffered advice of those such as Joan Lestor and Eric Heffer and leave the Labour Party and establish the Council for Social Democracy. Although it had been long in the gestating when the announcement came there was both shock and dismay that the course of events had culminated in this way.

For those who were on the left, this declaration was a further confirmation that their previous aim to change what they saw as an atrophied and archaic system of Labour's functions and processes. Benn and his supporters had been explicit in their reasoning for the need for a change to what they viewed as party democracy as the current mechanisms did nothing except to preserve failing MPs who were comfortably ensconced in comfortable constituencies. Such structures were no longer fit for purpose and had atrophied the party's

²⁴⁸ Dowdney, 'Left Attack "Rebels"', *The Daily Mirror*, 2 August 1980, p.2

²⁴⁹ David Owen Archives, University of Liverpool, Special Collections and Archives Centre, D 709 2/9/5, David Owen speech to the Merioneth Constituency Labour Party, Ganolfan Community Centre, Blaenau Ffestiniog, 4 October 1980, p.3

ability to represent the activists in the Constituencies. Ironically, both the Bennite supporters and those in the nascent Council for Social Democracy would have been able to have found common cause at the fudged alternative that was the new Electoral College, a painfully labyrinthine compromise that in the main satisfied nobody. Neil Kinnock was to state publicly that he was 'not satisfied with the results of Wembley. The formula adopted combines the minimum stability with the maximum opportunity for slander and misrepresentation from outside'.²⁵⁰

The Gang of Four and Benn could also find common ground on the assessment of the Governments of the 1960s and 1970s upon which they and their supporters had cast judgement and found them wanting. Those who had been in the Governments of Wilson and Callaghan had been stung by the attacks that had been levelled against them, for the perceived hypocrisy if not the criticism from those who had sat alongside them in cabinet. Yet this no longer mattered now that those on the right were now operating from outside of the Labour Party whilst now its left wing was seemingly in the ascendant. The opportunity was presenting itself to ensure that their stated aims of protocols such as mandatory reselection were to be enacted. For Jon Bloomfield this was a heady prospect:

The structure of Labour's constitution has been dented. For the first time in over six decades the division of labour and responsibility enshrined in the Webbs' constitution has been undermined. Mandatory reselection will give those who run the party more leverage over their MPs. The electoral college opens up the possibility of collective class involvement in the parliamentary process.²⁵¹

Such requirements were not only necessary but overdue. One such supporter of such measures was the recently defeated MP Audrey Wise, who whilst defending the rank and file MPs who had supported the fight against the IMF cuts in the last administration, was scathing

²⁵⁰ Letters to the Editor, *The Guardian*, 17 February 1981, p.10

²⁵¹ Bloomfield, 'Labour's Long Haul', *Marxism Today*, 6 December 1980, p.9

about the Governments of Wilson and Callaghan and highlighted what she saw as the primary reason for their failure:

Labour Governments haven't simply failed, Labour Governments have refused to try to use parliament. Labour Governments have refused to carry out Clause 4 of the Labour Party constitution. But it was compulsory that they did that; they did that, brothers and sisters, because we allowed them to get away with it. ²⁵²

With this parting criticism the reasoning for the campaign for the change in the party constitution was neatly encapsulated.

Conclusion

The 1970s was to see the revisionist wing of the Labour Party suffer from a crisis of confidence which was in stark contrast to the heady days of the 1950s and 1960s when the philosophies of Jay, Crosland and Jenkins provided a theoretical framework for governance for the party's right-wing. Inflation, a stagnating economy and the increase in trade union militancy had seen the social democratic project not only stymied but halted altogether. Revisionism was seemingly spent.

The death of Tony Crosland, not long after the IMF loan crisis debate had seen the harsh restricting of redistributionist policies, removed from the party one of the great post-war thinkers. Yet up to his passing some members of the Labour right had already expressed their disillusionment at his obstinacy in refusal to countenance revisions to his work *The Future of Socialism* and his apparent disregard for the social liberalism that he had once championed

²⁵² quoted in Peter Hain, (Editor), *Debate of the Decade: The Crisis and Future of the Left* (London: Pluto Press, 1980), p79

in the 1950s and 1960s. Crosland's legacy was to be seen his brand of revisionism revived a decade later but by then the schism had taken place.

Roy Jenkins for his part had made a temporary departure from British politics having become increasingly disillusioned with Labour and its continued drift to the left. The Dingleby Lecture in 1979 not only put down a marker on the need for a 'radical centre', it also galvanised many on the right who felt that they could no longer look to those such as Denis Healey for ideological leadership. The project which envisaged a party that was not ideologically extreme yet committed to social justice appealed and appalled many on the Labour right in equal measure. Whilst some such as David Owen did not hold Jenkins in as high regard as some others, the increasingly leftward drift was to prove too much of a temptation for those such as himself, William Rodgers and Shirley Williams with the possibility of leaving the Labour Party.

With defeat at the General Election of 1979, Denis Healey was now being considered the main contender to succeed James Callaghan yet doubts had already surfaced from some on the right as to whether he would be able to provide the intellectual leadership required in the absence of his contemporaries Crosland and Jenkins. The problem for Healey was his association with the abandonment of redistributive policies following the IMF crisis which had proven to be just abhorrent to those on the left but anathematic to the revisionists on the right as well.

For James Callaghan it was now simply a matter of trying to hold the party together long enough to allow the succession of Healey to take place. Unfortunately for the Labour right, there were to be those amongst their number determined to see this did not happen in order to precipitate a crisis that would cripple the Labour Party into the late 1980s.

Chapter Two

The origins of the SDP

Undoubtedly the right in the Labour Party are considering a breakaway, which is what Jim hinted at when he talked about the disaffiliating. I don't rule out the possibility that we might lose a chunk of the right, but they wouldn't have a future.

Tony Benn²⁵³

The fall of the Callaghan Government on a vote of no confidence ultimately triggered a constitutional debate within the Labour Party which rapidly transformed into an existential crisis. Within eighteen months of the defeat in May, the party was to see the departure of three of the most well-known former Ministers and a split that surpassed the disaffiliation of the Independent Labour Party in 1932. The break, ostensibly over policy and the ongoing issue of membership of the European Economic Community, was decided because of a new electoral college and the denuding of the power of the Parliamentary Labour Party, and the belief that any reversal or introduction of policies would be impossible to achieve.

Whilst to some on the outside, the catalyst for the ensuing break may seem to have been over a matter of organisation, the issue was to take on totemic significance. It was not just the fracturing of the Labour Party that was taking place but a revolt against the atrophied certainties of where power and influence lay within the party. The long-established supremacy of the Parliamentary Labour Party in matters of electing the leadership, of deciding the contents of the manifesto, and of pursuing these objectives should Government be reached, were to be effectively challenged. Nor could the party leadership rely on the Trade Unions who

²⁵³ Tony Benn, 18 September 1979, *Conflicts of Interest: Diaries, 1977-80* (London: Arrow Books, 1991), p.537

were facing their own internal conflicts and were also questioning the capability of the PLP to guide the party effectively. The question was one of how this power, the party's democratic deficit, was to be addressed and redistributed. As John Cartwright was to note, 'the great battles of the late fifties and early sixties were about policies. Today's struggle is for control. It will decide what sort of party Labour is going to be.'²⁵⁴

There were increasingly concerned and strident voices from the centre right of the Labour Party questioning its very purpose. From the Campaign for Labour Victory and Manifesto groups to those now outside of the Labour movement - the members of the right-wing Social Democratic Association (SDA) and the former Labour MP David Marquand - some were beginning to openly question whether Labour was capable of delivering on the aims of 'traditional welfare-state social democracy.'²⁵⁵ What was being called for was leadership for the Social Democratic right and the concept of an alternative project to provide this was beginning to manifest itself.

Unfortunately for James Callaghan, by May 1979 the party that he led was now out of office and unpopular even within parts of the electorate which had previously been its natural base. The landscape that now stretched bleakly ahead of Callaghan provided no clear room for manoeuvre. To be leader of the Labour Party was a Sisyphean undertaking even during more benevolent times. In the period following the defeat to Thatcher though it was especially arduous, and the Conservative victory of 1979 was to unleash the anger of those eager to express their view of where things had gone wrong. Callaghan's task was difficult as it was without the stark, Manichean opinions of those who were now preparing to range against each other. Moreover, and sadly for Callaghan, those factions, with their entrenched positions firmly set, were to first assault the now seemingly discredited Labourism that he and his Government epitomised. Both the so-called Hard Left and the Centre Right were soon to take the

²⁵⁴ John Cartwright, 'Labour After Brighton', Labour and Trade Union Press Service, p.1, November 1979

²⁵⁵ Quoted in Ian Bradley, *Breaking the Mould?: Birth and Prospects of the Social Democratic Party* (London: Wiley-Blackwell, 1981), p.66

Government of 1974-9 to task in brutal fashion and would in due course take radically differing approaches in their analysis.

Eric Shaw stated that between 1981 and 1983 Labour faced multiple crises which constituted a 'crisis of governance' and a 'crisis of legitimacy' as the hard left set about constitutional changes to correct, as they saw it, the unbalanced nature of Labour's system for electing the party leader.²⁵⁶ This chapter will critically assess the state of the Labour Party after the loss in 1979. It will show that the right of the party began to split and that the origins of the SDP can be seen as crystallising quickly after 1979, with the growing schism between Labour revisionists who still adhered to the Croslandite tradition and those who now considered this tradition exhausted. To continue Shaw's observation of the multiple crises, this chapter will examine what these were. Between the defeat of May 1979 and January 1981 the Labour Party faced three crises. The first was a crisis of confidence of those on the right of the party in the leadership of the party to provide effective direction. The second was a crisis of legitimacy, as the argument concerning the introduction of a more representative system over matters of policy making and leadership election led to competing visions to address Labour's democratic deficit. Finally, there was the crisis of faith. The establishment of the Electoral College, the election of Michael Foot as leader and the shift to the left further eroded the faith that those on Labour's right may still have had. For some, departure was the only real alternative to remaining in a party that had been their ideological home for decades. This chapter also draws upon oral history with interviews with such figures as the future Labour leader Neil Kinnock; the one-time member of the Bennite Campaign group of MPs Frank Dobson; Joyce Gould, assistant to the National Agent for the Labour Party under Harold Wilson and James Callaghan and former Director of Organisation under Neil Kinnock; and Bryan Davies, former Secretary to the Parliamentary Labour Party and Shadow Cabinet and MP for Oldham Central and Royton.

²⁵⁶ Eric Shaw, *The Labour Party Since 1979: Crisis and Transformation* (London: Routledge, 1994), pp.15-26

May 1979 – The Crisis of Confidence

The Conservative victory in 1979 had a profound effect on the Labour Party, one that was to transcend the loss in 1959 or 1970 and not be matched for transformative effect until perhaps 1992 and the bitterly-felt defeat of Neil Kinnock. Having governed for five years through one of the worst post-war economic slumps, without a majority to comfortably sustain it was an achievement in itself that it managed to survive as long as it did. Moreover, to oversee and survive the European Referendum in 1975 and still be a party that could, for the most part, remain intact was a testament to both the resilience of the wider Labour movement and the adroit political management of Harold Wilson. With the back-handed compliment that perhaps is to be expected from a former Gaitskellite, David Marquand mused that ‘no one could deny that weakness and insecurity are defects in a leader, but deviousness and lack of vision may have been a necessary condition of leading a party tormented by factionalism’.²⁵⁷ Wilson had managed to keep Labour together in the light of the shock of the 1970 election defeat, yet it is unlikely that even Wilson at the height of his powers could contain the bitterness and rancour that was to erupt with a vengeance following the 1979 defeat. This is not to say that his successor as party leader and Prime Minister, James Callaghan, was either unused or averse to the political subtleties to which Wilson was so adept – much to the chagrin of his detractors such as Marquand above. Callaghan’s ascent to the top place within the party was not on account of the sobriquet ‘Sunny Jim’ that had been given to him. Callaghan had been an assiduous cultivator of alliances within the party and the unions, and this saw him recover from the setback of devaluation. Yet he could be more brutal than Wilson in his decision making, his willingness to take tough decisions such as scuppering the ‘In Place of Strife’ legislation and the removal from cabinet of Barbara Castle when he became leader are the two most famous examples. Yet unlike Wilson, Callaghan had a loyal following within the Labour PLP

²⁵⁷ David Marquand, *The Progressive Dilemma: From Lloyd George to Blair* (Second Edition), (London: Phoenix Giant, 1999), p.164

and he was popular in the country, more so than the person who was now replacing him as prime minister, Margaret Thatcher.

Right up until the day of the election, Callaghan was consistently considered the leader most capable to lead a Government considered necessary for that time. A leader column in the *Guardian* of 2 May 1979 commented

The root questions when this campaign began were whether Mr Callaghan could restore an exhausted and dispirited party to credibility and confidence - and whether Mrs Thatcher, by the wisdom of her political philosophy and the detail of her alternatives, could offer something clearly better. And in the end we have only a steadily diminishing pining for "change and not much else". That is not enough. It reflects a lack of faith in the party of burning faith. And since there is scant faith; only a gritty determination to make the best of what we have by learning and unlearning and struggling, Mr Callaghan, a compassionate struggler, is not merely the man we deserve but also, in all probability, the man we need.²⁵⁸

This leader comment reflected the sentiment of the time, the acceptance of the post-war Consensus and its established certainties. In order to be able to govern, one had to deal effectively – which meant constructively – with the trade unions, one of the main pillars of the Consensus Establishment. This was often felt to be best achieved by the election of a Labour Government and the failure of the Heath Government of 1970-74, which was consumed by industrial unrest, was the example provided. Labour was to be elected on the back of the ensuing election and promised that the vaunted 'Social Contract' would ensure industrial harmony as a result of arbitration and conciliation without the need of a threat of penal censure that had been introduced by Heath in 1971 (and attempted, lest we forget by Wilson in 1969).

²⁵⁸ 'A faith that curled at the edges', *Guardian* Leader Column, 2 May 1979, <http://www.theguardian.com/politics/1979/may/02/electionspast.comment?redirection=guardian> [accessed 29 April 2015]

That the Social Contract collapsed in the wake of union dispute and strike action was to prove to those disillusioned with the post-war consensus that compromise was not always possible but indeed at times not desirable. The increasing influence of the hard left in the 1970s was a reaction to such compromises and the election of the Thatcher Government was another. In due course, the breakaway of the Social Democrats was to be another reaction to the end of compromise.

Callaghan's reputation as the leader of the last 'Old Labour' Government is heavily coloured by the defeat he was to lead his party to and the management of day to day crises through an increasingly diminishing authority. Marquand's observation that Callaghan was like Wilson, 'another adroit and guileful politician, with no interest in ideas and no discernible vision of the future',²⁵⁹ is as apt as it is blunt. Callaghan's appeal was that whilst he was identified as being on the right of the party, his trade union background and his social conservatism set him aside from those revisionists who championed more liberal causes and viewed such union loyalties as misplaced. Callaghan was the epitome of the Labourism as practised by Herbert Morrison, managerial and functional. Callaghan's ability to find consensus and to chair his Cabinets as such symbolised his ability to find compromise. The tragedy for the Labour Party was that the defeat in 1979 starkly emphasised its later inability to find such a compromise. It may be somewhat uncomfortable and indeed dispiriting to even consider that a party should make compromises on beliefs that many would hold dearly and in many cases zealously, yet as the Conservatives had proven previously (and Labour was more than aware of) the success of a party either in opposition or in power was predicated by the unity it was able to demonstrate. The defence of these shibboleths on all sides was to become all the more toxic with the introduction of proposals to present changes to the constitution of the Labour Party.

²⁵⁹ Marquand, *The Progressive Dilemma*, p.165

Viewed through the prism of the stagnation of the 1970s, the Labour Governments of 1974-79 can be seen as lumpen and non-ideological and simply trying to exist. This was symptomatic of the wider malaise affecting Western countries during this period. The politics of the consensus was appraised as the ideology of defeat. The hardening of attitudes of both the left and right of the British political landscape meant that the room for compromise was becoming increasingly unpopular and difficult to administer.

Tony Benn's diary entry for 18 September 1979 (which begins this chapter) betrays a nonchalance at a possible breakaway. It is possible that this was because even he was sceptical at the thought that such an event may not occur. For the previous thirty years Labour had endured excoriating battles yet had still managed to remain united in body if not in spirit. Benn's oft mentioned description of the party being a broad church of opinion had to include the Social Democrats who were now the target of vitriol by his supporters.

With this backdrop of public and private recrimination and speculation, Labour was set to meet for its annual party conference. Whilst some lament the recent changes in the sanitised, debate free stages that now take place annually ('Party Conference is not a party conference anymore,' to quote Joyce Gould²⁶⁰), this was a conference that was to become notorious for the content. Whilst conference had (and continues to have) separate sections for each area of the Labour movement, the sense of persecution felt by some of the members of the PLP was acute. The division between the PLP and the constituency delegates was both physically and emotionally stark, 'MPs, corralled at one end of the hall in the political equivalent of an ice hockey sin-bin...persistently criticised, ridiculed and derided by the Bennites on the rostrum,' according to a contemporary account in the *Daily Mirror*.²⁶¹ 'It was a shouters conference, a ranters conference' recalled Neil Kinnock, 'what George Orwell called the game of 'fe-fi-fo-fum, I smell the blood of a right-wing deviationist, which has been a favourite pastime of the

²⁶⁰ Interview with Joyce Gould, 10 December 2012

²⁶¹ Terence Lancaster, 'Conference Commentary', *Daily Mirror*, p.5 *Daily Mirror*, 4 October 1979, p.5

Labour Party.’ In Kinnock’s opinion it was a conference that saw a ‘substantial chunk of the Labour party departing from reality.’²⁶² For Kinnock this was to be a revelatory experience for him and other Tribunites but who at this stage were cautious in their actions.

The tone of the 1979 Party Conference at Brighton was encapsulated by the opening remarks made by the Party Chairman, Ron Hayward. In a speech which was shocking for an intemperance and hostility usually reserved for opposition parties, Hayward laid into Callaghan and the Government that he led – ‘I have come not to praise Callaghan but to bury him.’²⁶³ For those on the hard left this was the opportunity to hold the Labour Government and the right which sustained it to public account.

During his speech to Conference Tony Benn made a series of attacks on the Government that he had previously been a member of, and said that “This is the moment of truth, not only for the party but for the nation...The British people need democratic socialism and the Labour movement now as they have never needed it before.” Benn’s assertion that ‘Labour would have to take on the business and banking communities to restore full employment’²⁶⁴ demonstrated the more strident rhetoric that was reflective of the Hard Left and the confidence and belief that Benn would be ultimately successful.

Brighton was to see the first stages of the move of ultimate authority from the PLP. Whilst the first attempt at removing the election of party leader and deputy leader was defeated, it was Brighton that was to see the drafting of the manifesto passed to the NEC. The scale of the victory - 3,936,000 to 3,088,000 - was considerable and significant in that it was carried with trade union support. Fears on the left that the unions would revert to their traditional roles of protecting the hegemony of the PLP were to be unfounded, at least at this stage. Yet as the union support was not unanimous, the Bennites still had reason to be cautious.

²⁶² Interview with Neil Kinnock, 18 January 2012

²⁶³ Kenneth O. Morgan, *Michael Foot: A Life* (London: Harper Perennial, 2007), p.373

²⁶⁴ Terence Stringer, ‘It’s the moment of truth, warns Benn’, *Daily Mirror*, 4 October 1979, p.5

In response to the withering attacks from the Chairman, Benn and increasingly angry delegates of both the PLP and CLPs, Callaghan was to make a defence of the previous Government whilst reminding Conference of Labour's traditional radicalism and the potential dangers of atomising into factionalism:

We are a party of change, and a party of change by its very nature requires common, concerted action, and such a party should consider very carefully before it fractionalises into 635 pieces. The central thrust that comes from common action, so the result may not be what the movers of these proposals think it may be.²⁶⁵

Turning to the matter of the upcoming internal inquest into the party's finances and organisation, Callaghan stated that he hoped that the findings of the Commission of Enquiry would help to discuss the roles of the PLP, the NEC and Conference. Callaghan made a sharp gesture to those on the left on the NEC who were pushing for changes already at the present Conference: 'These questions are important but it is illogical, in my view, to take the decisions first and then ask a Commission of Enquiry to look into them afterwards.'²⁶⁶

Callaghan also repeated the rhetorical question asked by Joan Ruddock (at the time the Labour candidate for Newbury prior to becoming an MP in 1987): why did Labour do well in Scotland yet won only 11 seats out of a possible 161 in the South of England? And what cost the party seats in the industrial Midlands when a Labour Government had tried to maintain industries such as British Leyland. Callaghan proffered the suggestion that it was 'because there was no agreement about what the place of the low-paid worker should be against the place of skilled worker.'²⁶⁷ Callaghan also said that the Enquiry would also look into why so many women did not vote for Labour. Furthermore, he added that it was 'profoundly disturbing' that a poll taken a month before the General Election found that a majority viewed

²⁶⁵ James Callaghan, Speech to Labour Party Conference, Brighton, September 1979, <http://www.britishpoliticalspeech.org/speech-archive.htm?speech=177> [accessed 25 January 2015]

²⁶⁶ Callaghan, Speech to Labour Party Conference, Brighton, September 1979

²⁶⁷ Callaghan, Speech to Labour Party Conference, Brighton, September 1979

Conservatives as having more concern for ordinary people than the Labour Party. Callaghan said that whilst those within the party may have had difficulty in understanding this finding, the reality was that it is was 'what other people perceive about us. That is the problem.'²⁶⁸

This emphasis on the new political landscape was exactly what Callaghan was attempting to get across, that the certainties that Labour had been holding onto were no longer to be trusted. Within England in particular but not restricted to it, the Conservatives had successfully attracted a significant number of Labour's natural electoral base, the skilled and unskilled working classes. Just as in the 1920s and 30s when Baldwin cultivated the professional middle classes of Middle England, the post-Heath Conservatives had set about trying to eschew the image of privilege that had been synonymous with the party. This had only been partially successful and was stymied by the 1974 defeat, yet by 1979 the Conservatives had managed to successfully corner a significant number of working class voters. The so-called party of the elite had appealed to the aspirational nature of the blue-collar and manual working section of society that had been the bedrock of Labour's support since its inception and had made significant advances in capturing them.

For Callaghan this was something the Labour Party had to acknowledge, stating that it was 'the first time in the history of politics in this country that I have known such a result.'²⁶⁹ Appealing to the party for unity, Callaghan called on the Conference to 'examine ourselves, everybody, and see what reasons we give for these things. After all, everybody wants a Labour Government to succeed; we are all united in that, so let us avoid a lot of internal party-bashing among each other and let us have a bit of Tory-bashing for a change.'²⁷⁰

As Kinnock noted, this conference drove Callaghan 'to despair'²⁷¹ with the NEC meetings that took place ahead of the mooted Commission of Enquiry. Kinnock noted that Callaghan was

²⁶⁸ Callaghan, Speech to Labour Party Conference, Brighton, September 1979

²⁶⁹ Callaghan, Speech to Labour Party Conference, Brighton, September 1979

²⁷⁰ Callaghan, Speech to Labour Party Conference, Brighton, September 1979

²⁷¹ Interview with Neil Kinnock, 18 January 2012

threatening to resign and others such as Foot and Healey urged him to stay on for the sake of party unity.²⁷² Kinnock himself recalled he said 'for Christ's sake, Jim, don't do that, you'll make a catastrophic situation worse,' and that he went home from the Conference 'very miserable indeed'.²⁷³ What was telling in Kinnock's recollection was that he urged Callaghan not resign and to 'not to let them force you into that kind of submission.'²⁷⁴ Any hopes that Callaghan may have held for conciliation between the disputing groups were to be dashed almost immediately.

In a private letter to group members, the Campaign for Labour Victory's Organising Secretary laid bare the concerns that were held by some on the Social Democratic right and the role of the CLV. Commenting on the lack of leadership, Alex McGiven wrote that 'Most Social Democrats do not have a coherent sense of ideological direction anymore,' and that 'they go off in all sort of directions.' McGiven added that whilst this was perhaps a positive development and 'may, to a degree, be a valuable social democratic tradition', he cautioned that, 'different ideas within that tradition must have some coherent ideological structure and leadership. That, at the moment, just does not exist.'²⁷⁵

McGiven followed this with the fear of many CLV supporters in the CLPs 'for the first time in their lives talking of the break-up of the Party' and that these were 'not' (emphasis is McGiven's) right wing fanatics of the SDA type.'²⁷⁶ This acknowledgement that such sentiments were no longer the preserve of those who supported the Social Democratic Alliance of Stephen Hasler and others was to serve warning that positions were hardening further.

²⁷² Interview with Neil Kinnock, 18 January 2012

²⁷³ Interview with Neil Kinnock, 18 January 2012

²⁷⁴ Interview with Neil Kinnock, 18 January 2012

²⁷⁵ Central Manchester, People's History Museum Archives, CLV/4, *McGiven Report*, 'The Labour Party and CLV', p 3, 15 November 1979

²⁷⁶ Central Manchester, People's History Museum Archives, CLV/4, *McGiven Report*, 'The Labour Party and CLV', p 3, 15 November 1979

In reply, Bill Rodgers advised McGiven to organise and that whilst he was ready to support a group in a similar way as he had done in the 1960s with the CDS and the 1970s with Manifesto, it required further help from others within the party: 'My general conclusion is that CLV must take more initiative itself and generate its own momentum.'²⁷⁷ It was also a tacit acknowledgement that in order to succeed that the Right had to mobilise in the same way that the Left had been able to achieve with some success through the auspices of the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy. Callaghan's exhortation to the PLP to in 1976 to disband the Manifesto and Tribune groups had not only been ignored but had seen an extension of the factionalism for which he had railed against.

Labour was also in danger of engineering the leadership succession and thus repeating history when Wilson held on until 1976 to ensure Callaghan's election. This time it was to be Callaghan holding out to provide succession to the shadow Chancellor, Denis Healey. According to Healy, Callaghan told him he was staying on in order to prepare Healey the right opportunity to take over, but noted that what happened eventually was 'ten years of internal fighting which was quite as damaging to the Party as the decade of struggle with Bevanism after Attlee lost power.'²⁷⁸

On 22 November 1979, whilst the man who had one time been tipped to be a future Labour leader appeared on BBC Television in order to give the annual Dimpleby Lecture. Entitled 'Home Thoughts from Abroad', Roy Jenkins' speech made clear and public the feelings that he had held for some time whilst within the Labour Party and by extension felt by those supporters closest to him. In his memoirs Jenkins recalls his Dimpleby Lecture perfectly chimed with the disillusionment of some of the right within the Labour Party and the ostracising many felt at the increasing advances of the hard left. For Jenkins what was required was an end to the adversarial nature of British politics which had become increasingly partisan and

²⁷⁷ Central Manchester, People's History Museum Archives, CLV/4, Letter from William Rodgers to Alex McGiven, 15 November 1979

²⁷⁸ Denis Healey, *The Time of My Life* (London: Penguin Books, 1990), p.466

ideologically extreme. Legislation on matters such on employment law had been implemented and rescinded as Governments changed and as a result this exacerbated tensions within society and were also harmful for the economy. Jenkins also made a call for a change to the electoral system to that of proportional representation which made his stance closer to that long held by the Liberal Party.

Jenkins's call for an end for ideological politics was somewhat contradictory when he made claims for a 'radical centre' which by its very nature suggests the need for some ideological underpinning. For David Marquand Jenkins appeared to be advocating something that was consistent with his liberal view of society and belief in the benign role of the state in economic terms: 'he knew what he was against more precisely what he was for. By instinct, he was for a mixture of pluralistic liberalism and Keynesian social democracy.'²⁷⁹

The reaction to the lecture within and without the party was instant and mixed as could be expected. For those on the right of the party, it wasn't completely welcome. Shirley Williams, in speech to the Hertford and Stevenage Constituency Labour Party, said that 'the Liberals aren't a serious alternative'.²⁸⁰ For Bill Rodgers the Dimpleby Lecture signalled Jenkins' intention to return to British politics and that it was clear that this did not necessarily involve a return to the party that he only notionally left in 1976.²⁸¹

Yet whilst he was sceptical of Jenkins' motives it did provide him with a pretext to warn his party of its continuing move leftwards. In his speech at Abertilly on 30 November 1979, Rodgers warned that the Labour Party had a year in which to 'save itself' and 'remain a broad coalition of democratic socialists' and that the consequence of a fight to the last with the 'hard'

²⁷⁹ David Marquand, *The Progressive Dilemma: From Lloyd George to Blair* (Second Edition), (London: Phoenix Giant, 1999), p.193

²⁸⁰ Central Manchester, People's History Museum Archives, *Shirley Williams Speech to Hertford and Stevenage Constituency Labour Party*, 28 November 1979, and see also Shirley Williams, *Climbing the Bookshelves: The Autobiography of Shirley Williams* (London: Virago Press Ltd, 2009), p.226

²⁸¹ Bill Rodgers, *Fourth Among Equals: The Autobiography of Bill Rodgers* (London: Politico's Publishing Ltd, 2000), p.198

left would be that if they won, those who considered themselves moderate would leave.²⁸² For Rodgers, tribally and emotionally wedded to the Labour Party since his teens, this was meant as a sincere yet stark analysis of the political situation facing the party, and it was meant to have the necessary impact of alerting the right of the need to mobilise. In private, and as Rodgers has since recorded, both he and Shirley Williams, whilst now discussing in general terms a new political party, were still committed to remaining inside the Labour Party.²⁸³

The left were naturally scathing. For Benn, Jenkins's lecture merely confirmed his view that such a 'radical centre' party had always been in existence:

Of course, there had always been a centre party in British politics in the twentieth century; it is made up of Butskellites, including Macmillan, Callaghan, Wilson and Heath at one stage. It is that grouping that has presided over our decline. This is clearly what Roy wants to see happen.²⁸⁴

This observation of Benn's was in keeping of his analysis for the reasons for Britain's post-war decline in general and Labour's dependence on social democracy in particular. The purity of the neo-liberal analysis as envisaged and then being introduced by Mrs Thatcher could only be countered by the adoption of a similarly uncompromising approach by the left. Benn's ideal of Democratic Socialism was to be outlined more clearly in the publication of his writings in late 1979 and edited by the Campaign member, Chris Mullin. In *Arguments for Socialism*, Benn outlined what he saw as the failures of the post-1945 Consensus and the acceptance of the decline of the United Kingdom as an economic power. In this analysis Benn was taking the same jaundiced view of the now defunct consensus as the leader of the Conservatives and those on the British neo-liberal right, yet such a sense at the failings of the Consensus

²⁸² Bill Rodgers, *Fourth Among Equals*, p.199

²⁸³ Bill Rodgers, *Fourth Among Equals*, p.200

²⁸⁴ Benn, *Conflicts of Interest*, p.558

and the restrictions of Labourite corporatism were also beginning to be expressed by those on the Social Democratic right.

The Crisis of Legitimacy

The anticipated introduction of a new electoral college for the election of leader and deputy leader was to see the Campaign for Labour Victory mobilising calling for support of alternative system of 'One Member, One Vote'. To this end, David Owen, rapidly identified as the focal point of the campaign for OMOV, made a speech in which he not only touched upon the idea of a more participative party democracy but opened up the front on what he saw as the core values of the Social Democracy that he believed in: 'We will need to bring industrial democracy to life in Britain. We will need to reverse the corporatism of the past. We will need to decentralise Government and develop genuine participation.'²⁸⁵

Owen was increasingly raising his profile as one of the more identified members of the Labour right who were objecting to the reversal of long-held policy positions. As Labour delegates met in Blackpool ahead of the Party Conference, David Owen made a speech which took exception to the rejection of membership of the European Economic Community but also took aim at the very notion of 'right and left' within the Labour Party. At the fringe debate at the Labour Committee for Europe on 28 September, Owen asked how opposition to European membership could be construed as a preserve of what he construed as 'the so-called left', particularly as many of their European counterparts were backers for both the EEC and NATO. This criticism was aimed to highlight the parochial and mildly nationalistic attitudes of those within the Labour Party who viewed the EEC and NATO with a suspicion borne out of an emotional patriotism. Benn, Foot and Shore, all from differing factions but veterans of the 1975 No Campaign against continued EEC membership, could evoke the sanctity of British

²⁸⁵ Liverpool, University of Liverpool Special Collections and Archives Centre, David Owen Papers, D 709 2/9/5, *Speech by the Rt. Hon. Dr David Owen MP, at a Campaign for Labour Victory meeting for Trade Unionists at the Hotel Metropole, Brighton, Monday 1 September 1980*

Parliamentary sovereignty and its primacy over external bodies, for Owen this flew in the face of the notion of Labour being an internationalist movement.

It is now when the Community is unpopular that we socialists who believe in our membership must have the courage to stand firm in our convictions that it remains in the national interest for Britain to stay within the Community.²⁸⁶

If the Brighton Conference of 1980 was a deeply dispiriting time for the Labour right it was to provide Michael Foot with the opportunity to continue his latter-day role as the wise elder guardian of the party. Foot's speech at the Brighton Conference, in which he said that the Labour Party was 'a tolerant, tolerant body which strove to keep a balance between the different sections,'²⁸⁷ was in essence no different from any given by Callaghan or in sentiment to the broad church analysis.

Callaghan, demonstrating again his understanding of the wider public feeling outside of the self-sealed bubble of the Conference provided a reminder from Attlee as a forlorn warning to the delegates:

Self-criticism is a healthy thing as long as it does not lead to a paralysis of the will. But there is a danger that a party may be so concerned about its own health that it becomes a political valetudinarian incapable of taking an active part in affairs. It may discuss its own internal conditions to such an extent that it disgusts all those with whom it comes in contact.²⁸⁸

Trying one final attempt at a valediction of the last Government, Callaghan asserted that Labour had much to be proud of. 'Comrades, we have won great battles. There is no need for

²⁸⁶ Liverpool, University of Liverpool Special Collections and Archives Centre, David Owen Papers, D 709 2/9/5, Speech by David Owen to the Labour Committee for Europe, 28 September 1980

²⁸⁷ Kenneth O. Morgan, *Michael Foot: A Life* (London: Harper Perennial, 2007), p.299

²⁸⁸ James Callaghan, quoting Clement Attlee, at the Labour Party Conference, Blackpool, September 1980, accessed via <http://www.britishpoliticalspeech.org/speech-archive.htm?speech=178> [accessed 25 January 2015]

us to be ashamed of what the Labour Movement and Labour Governments have done in recent years.’²⁸⁹

Callaghan added a caveat to this comment as both a call for unity and also a warning to those contemplating other actions. ‘Only the Labour Party can fulfil it. Nobody here, I think, talks any nonsense about centre parties or the rest of it. It’s as dead as a dodo. Mere fluff.’²⁹⁰

Brighton was significant for the policy reversals that were inflicted on the right of the party. The first was the adoption of mandatory reselection of MPs in which sitting members would face a selection process each Parliament. The second motion was the end of the PLP’s sole responsibility for electing the party leader, at least in the long term. Whilst the principle and practice of the PLP being the only body that elected leader was removed, what was to be put in place was thrown into doubt. The result was a temporary fudge which infuriated more than it placated. Dianne Hayter added that the whole pretence of debate and the influence of the Constituency delegates was ‘complete nonsense’ and that as the CLP only controlled 10% of the vote at Conference with the Trade Unions controlling 90%.²⁹¹

The final motion was carried with much less ambiguity. The vote passing the motion for withdrawal from the European Economic Community, five years after Wilson had completed taking the party through the tortuous procession to the first UK-wide referendum. This was anathema to those who were in favour of membership and not just those on the right but those ‘Schizophrenics like me who were Bevanites but pro-Europe.’²⁹²

Within a month of Conference having taken place, Callaghan stepped down as party leader. As leader Callaghan offered much more that went beyond what was undoubtedly his astute

²⁸⁹ James Callaghan, speech to Labour Party Conference, Blackpool, September 1980, accessed via <http://www.britishpoliticalspeech.org/speech-archive.htm?speech=178> [accessed 25 January 2015]

²⁹⁰ James Callaghan, speech to Labour Party Conference, Blackpool, September 1980, accessed via <http://www.britishpoliticalspeech.org/speech-archive.htm?speech=178> [accessed 25 January 2015]

²⁹¹ Interview with Dianne Hayter, 24 October 2014

²⁹² Interview with Joyce Gould, 10 December 2012

chairmanship of a divided Cabinet and an equally fractious party at a time of acute economic downturn. Whilst Ian Bradley noted in a *Times* article on 16 October 1980 that Callaghan's critics thought 'the Labour Party had not developed intellectually under his leadership and that there had not been enough long-term planning,' this was to miss the point.²⁹³ Callaghan was the perfect leader for Labour Party during the IMF crisis precisely because his long held non-involvement in the party's factionalism. It allowed him to be a strangely neutral leader yet one whose long association with Labour assured him of the benefit of trust. Yet once power was lost, Callaghan was seen as emblematic of the Labourist tradition at its most atrophied, the embodiment of a dull corporatism that was as reactionary as it was unimaginative.

Callaghan was seen as a block on progress even by those whom may have otherwise have felt loyalty towards. Callaghan had stayed on in the hope that the conditions would be suitable for the election of his successor which he assumed to be Healey. This delay was not wholly appreciated by some of those on the right such as Radice who partly placed the blame for the poisonous atmosphere of the period on Callaghan's shoulders. However, there were many on both the right and the left who had been grateful for the decision of Callaghan's to remain, even if it did ensure the delay of the introduction of the new Electoral College. Thus it was that, in what Callaghan must have surely hoped was to be his parting gift to Labour, the party was to meet on 10 November 1980 to elect the new leader under the existing rules – the PLP were to be the electors.

The Crisis of Faith – Healey and the Victory of Foot

Whilst the election for leader was to take place within the Commons and for the last time be the sole preserve of the Parliamentary Labour Party, the pressure on MPs from their constituency parties was still being keenly felt. As was perhaps fitting for the general tenor of

²⁹³ Ian Bradley, 'James Callaghan, conservative mediator who tried to run Labour by consent', *The Times*, 16 October 1980, p.4

the period, the election of Callaghan's successor was parts tragedy (for the right) and farce (for the party as a whole).

The announcement of Callaghan's resignation immediately sparked speculation that Tony Benn would be minded to stand as he had done in 1976. Benn, writing in his diaries, was quite bullish at the prospect, noting that he led the polling of CLP Chairmen.²⁹⁴ Benn was advised by Eric Heffer that, if Michael Foot was not to stand, then he should consider standing and that he would run as his deputy, which gives an indication of the high confidence felt within the CLPD at this time.²⁹⁵ In due course the candidates were announced although Benn was not one of them. Benn had decided to heed the counsel provided by those sympathetic to him with many saying that to stand in an election of just the PLP would run counter to the aims of the CLPD.²⁹⁶

Denis Healey was deemed the clear favourite. Whilst the *bête noir* of the left, Healey was comfortably the most popular choice within the wider public and not just out of the candidates standing, being the preferred choice of any politician in the country at the time. Yet Healey was to commence what can be only described as a series of non-campaigning, neither cultivating the necessary support within the PLP or outside within the movement in general. Healey saw Labour's role and his own views in a memorial lecture in which he described the necessary incrementalism of parliamentary socialism by quoting the Marxist philosopher Lesjek Kolakowski:

Democratic socialism requires, in addition to commitment to a number of basic values, hard knowledge and rational calculation...it is an obstinate will to erode by inches the

²⁹⁴ The numbers, according to Benn were as follows: 38% favoured Benn, 28% Healey, 15% Peter Shore, 11% Foot and 4.8% for John Silkin. The figures came from a survey of 250 CLP Chairmen conducted by the ITV current affairs programme, TV Eye. Tony Benn, *The End of an Era: Diaries 1980-90* (London: Arrow Books, 1994), p.36

²⁹⁵ Benn, *The End of an Era: Diaries 1980-90* p.36

²⁹⁶ Benn, *The End of an Era: Diaries 1980-90* p.38

conditions which produce avoidable suffering, oppression, hunger, wars, racial and national hatred, insatiable greed and vindictive envy.²⁹⁷

Healey had, like Crosland, been a Gaitskellite after being a Communist whilst at Oxford, and like Gaitskell and Crosland had an ambivalent approach to Europe. As Giles Radice noted, 'throughout his political career, Denis Healey had always been "agnostic", when not downright sceptical, about European initiatives' adding that he had been opposed to the European Coal and Steel Community, membership of the Common Market when Macmillan made an application on behalf of the United Kingdom until finally accepting membership by voting to stay in during the 1975 Referendum.²⁹⁸ Such a viewpoint was to make Healey even less of a proposition to those disaffected Croslandites who had transferred the allegiances to Jenkins. Matters were not helped by Healey's resistance to the networking which was necessary to gain support at Westminster but which had not necessarily hindered his ascent through the Labour ranks. Whilst Healey was on the centre right, he obstinately avoided association with any particular group, as Giles Radice observed, Healey was 'a loner who did not join groups or cabals or even bother to set one up of his own.'²⁹⁹

Healey's approach, which equally baffled those who were campaigning for him, was no less surprising when one considers his showing in 1976 in the election to replace Wilson. Whilst Healey obstinately continued that campaign until he was automatically eliminated, Healey should have observed the consequences of the lack of wider support in the party which had resulted in Tony Crosland finishing bottom of the count.

The count when it took place on 10 November took many by surprise. After the early eliminations of Shore and Silkin, the final count of the votes had Foot winning by ten votes: 139 MPs had voted for the current Deputy Leader as opposed to 129 for Healey. Ian Aitken

²⁹⁷ Denis Healey, *The Time of My Life* (London: Penguin Books, 1990), p.472

²⁹⁸ Giles Radice, *Friends and Rivals: Crosland, Jenkins and Healey* (London: Little Brown, 2002), p.276

²⁹⁹ Radice, *Friends and Rivals*, p.153

noted that there was 'incredulous cheering from Mr Foot's supporters' and almost immediately Healey announced his intention to stand for the Deputy Leadership post.³⁰⁰

Healey's defeat was a significant development. For the first time since the 1930s, a party leader had not come from the right of the party (Wilson notwithstanding). With the defeat of his candidacy, Healey was the last of the Gaitskellites to be denied a chance of leading the party. With Crosland gone and Jenkins no longer within the party, Healey was the only chance that the old CDS members within the Manifesto group had of one of their own becoming leader.³⁰¹

In retrospect, Healey also acknowledges that his style could have also backfired against him, noting that one of his campaigners, Roy Hattersley, had 'justly complained of my insensitivity towards my supporters.'³⁰² That the defeat was in part engineered by members of that group was equally significant. Crewe and King, Shirley Williams and Healey himself have contended that members of the right voted for Foot in order to create the catalyst for any defections to take place. This was politics being played out in its basest form, in essence an act of self-flagellation in order to facilitate an exit out of the Labour Party. Healey certainly believed that whilst most of the MPs that were subsequently to join the SDP voted for him, some needed an excuse: 'several voted for Michael Foot in order to justify their later defection; their few votes alone were sufficient to explain my defeat'.³⁰³ This was also an explanation supported by Crewe and King in their later account of the SDP.

³⁰⁰ Ian Aitken, 'Labour picks Foot to heal party splits', *The Guardian*, 11 November 1980, <https://www.theguardian.com/century/1980-1989/Story/0,,108171,00.html>, [accessed 25 January 2015]

³⁰¹ In the obituary for Tony Benn in the *Independent*, 15 March 2014, p.48, Tam Dalyell makes the interesting contention that 'One of the big "ifs" of Benn's career is what would have happened if Crosland had not been struck down prematurely, and had become Labour Leader, as he certainly would have done when Michael Foot was elected to succeed Callaghan in 1980.' If Healey was unelectable due his lack of 'clubability' then Crosland would not have fared much better?

³⁰² Healey, *The Time of My Life*, p.476

³⁰³ Healey, *The Time of My Life*, p.476

Bill Rodgers wondered if Healey could have won but stated that it was Healey's 'failure to take risks and fight was a grave misjudgement.'³⁰⁴ Other supporters such as Giles Radice noted that, for most of 1980, Healey 'kept his head down and his mouth shut', and that this did not help his cause in winning round otherwise sympathetic MPs.³⁰⁵

Hattersley, who had been doing much of the background work for Healey's non-campaign gave a savage indictment on those who chose not to vote for Healey:

By electing Michael, the PLP sacrificed its claim to being the best judge of who was most likely to lead Labour into Government. It also inaugurated three years of opposition which were so bizarre that, even at the time, most of us knew that the Party was coming perilously close to extinction.³⁰⁶

Jenkins disputes that there was a particular reason for the breakaway, refuting 'the conventional wisdom...that Healey's defeat by Foot so dismayed the Social Democrats as to open the road to the SDP'. Whilst this made the defections and by-elections easier, the right in the Labour Party had by 1980 'become so disenchanted by Healey that his defeat was rather a relief to them.'³⁰⁷ Disenchantment with Healey was certainly as a factor as had been noted above and in an interview with the *Times* in 1983, Owen admitted that he may have stayed within Labour had Healey been victorious and yet:

I think the fact that Denis Healey did not stand up and fight, which is what he ought to have done, demonstrates how much the rot had set in. Good people were just getting used to compromising on essentials that they had lost sight of reality.³⁰⁸

³⁰⁴ Bill Rodgers, *Fourth Among Equals*, p.191

³⁰⁵ Giles Radice, *Diaries 1980-2001: From Political Disaster to Election Triumph: The Political Diaries of Giles Radice* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 2004) p.281

³⁰⁶ Roy Hattersley, *Who Goes Home? – Scenes from a Political Life* (London: Little, Brown and Company, 1995), p.226

³⁰⁷ Roy Jenkins, *A Life at the Centre* (London: Macmillan London, 1991), p.530

³⁰⁸ 'Owen speaks of regret at Healey defeat', *The Times*, 21 November 1983, p.2

There is some agreement, though, that had Healey won, the situation could have been considerably different. Dennis Outwin, for example, wrote with some confidence that if Healey had won, 'the SDP would almost certainly have never been formed,' and that Labour could have won in 1983.³⁰⁹ Giles Radice was similarly convinced that a Healey victory would have prevented the SDP split.

Roy Hattersley was more guarded, believing that whilst Healey might not have carried the party to victory in 1983, 'we would have been beaten, not annihilated, and during the following five years he would have led a convincing recovery.'³¹⁰

Crewe and King provide a more sober judgement, suggesting that Healey would not have been successful, being more akin to Callaghan and therefore would have only delayed the defections. Crew and King state that as a consequence only a leader from the left was successfully capable of leading Labour in the early 1980s. Kinnock, who thought of Healey as 'irreverence on legs' thought there was nothing right-wing about Healey nor others such as Hattersley. 'There was nothing right-wing about Denis. But they were associated in the way in which these pretty inadequate definitions have developed more by commentators than participants.'³¹¹ For Kinnock, only Foot was capable of leading the Labour Party at that juncture to prevent the cracks in the party becoming even bigger.

When presented with this theory, Dianne Hayter was forthright in rejection the hypothesis and was strong in her belief that Healey would have been the correct choice: 'I don't think we needed a leader from the left, we needed a leader. Michael Foot, bless him, may have been many things but he wasn't a leader.'³¹²

³⁰⁹ Dennis Outwin, *The Social Democratic Story*, (Maidenhead: Hartwood Publications, 1987), p.13

³¹⁰ Hattersley, *Who Goes Home?*, p.225

³¹¹ Interview with Neil Kinnock 18 January 2012

³¹² Interview with Dianne Hayter, 24 October 2014 – indeed, Baroness Hayter's initial response to the idea that it needed a leader from the left was one word – 'crap!'

Clive Soley similarly thought that Healey would have been the better leader but acknowledged the position Labour found itself in:

I think if Denis had led the party our chances of reviving in the public fortunes would have gone up but the divisions deep in the party probably would have got deeper. We were in this impossible position where the public wanted Denis and the Party wanted Michael, or better still Tony Benn, actually, Michael was a bridge to walk over.³¹³

Soley's view was that Healey may have improved the party's fortunes but that the process would have been 'bloody and pretty bruising but it was just possible that the party might have recovered and pulled itself together.'³¹⁴

Bryan Davies demurred on the possibility of Healey succeeding, noting that Healey was hamstrung by his previously poor showing at the last leadership election of 1976, having held two 'the two worst portfolios for winning friends in the Labour Party' as Defence Secretary and Chancellor of the Exchequer. For Davies, whilst Healey was a powerful speaker and had proven himself during the IMF crisis, he doubted if he was ever the 'right-wing saviour of the Labour Party', lacking in the ability to talk to other MPs who were not working on 'the issues that he was involved in,' and whilst he was a great Parliamentary performer he was also 'heavy handed and not a binder up of wounds', although he did praise Healey for his party loyalty.³¹⁵

In his history of the Labour Party, Martin Pugh suggested that the election of Healey may have resulted in precipitating a left-wing schism.³¹⁶ With the Left as strong as it was in the CLPs, if any such schism was to have taken place, it would have been difficult to see it coming from anywhere other than those who may have supported Benn but even then such a decision would have been predicated on the behaviour of Benn himself. It could be safe to surmise that

³¹³ Interview with Clive Soley, 19 November 2014

³¹⁴ Interview with Clive Soley, 19 November 2014

³¹⁵ Interview with Bryan Davies, 19 November 2014

³¹⁶ Martin Pugh, *Speak for Britain! A New History of the Labour Party* (London: Vintage, 2011), p.364

in the event of a Left-wing breakaway those such as Stuart Holland or Dennis Skinner would have remained in the Labour Party. This is in part because Benn himself would have been unlikely to leave in the event of a Healey victory as the new Electoral College was set in such a way that he would have had an opportunity to make a challenge under the new rules the following year. Benn had to be dissuaded from standing for the leadership by many of those on the Left and whilst he was willing to take their counsel on this occasion, he was not to be so reticent the following year. If Healey had won in November 1980, it may be assumed that a Benn leadership challenge would have followed in 1981 although this would be against a backdrop of a party that had not lost some of its MPs to the nascent SDP but still with a grassroots strongly favouring the Left. Thus whilst Benn may have dismissed a BBC report that he would stand against Foot as 'pure black propaganda',³¹⁷ the situation which would have presented itself to him would have been an opportunity for Benn to make a challenge, something which Benn had contemplated a year previously when the suggestion was put to him by Arthur Scargill even before the Electoral College had come into being.³¹⁸ A Healey victory may well, as Clive Soley suggested, have been a bloody period of the party's history but it may have also countered the concerns of Owen that 'the rot' which he was to later refer to had been contained or was in the process of being dealt with.

Peter Jenkins was to opine before the contest that if Healey was to win the leadership that in due course Foot would have given in 'to temptation that some of his friends fear he may eventually succumb.'³¹⁹ Whilst suggesting that Healey would by that point be secure in his position due to support by trade unions 'reluctant to trigger a civil war,' the potential for another imminent challenge would be expected. Yet with Foot having to be effectively cajoled into running for the leadership, it is perhaps questionable to suppose that he would run again having lost twice in succession.

³¹⁷ Benn, *The End of an Era: Diaries 1980-90*, p.50

³¹⁸ Benn, *Conflicts of Interest*, p.558, p.560

³¹⁹ Peter Jenkins, 'Labour is pushed nearer disintegration,' *The Guardian*, 22 October 1980, p.15

The issue for some voting for Foot was survival and a quieter time in their constituencies, certainly one that hold up to more inspection and a theory that Hattersley proffered too:

The crucial fact of Michael Foot's victory was the belief that, if he became leader, the constituency parties would calm down. Members of Parliament, about to take part in a secret ballot, were instructed under pain of deselection to show their ballot papers to constituency activists – just to ensure their cross had not been put against the name of the man who capitulated to the IMF.³²⁰

Foot certainly provided in his victory speech the wish to run an inclusive opposition and called for unity within the party. As Aitken again noted, 'his words were clearly designed to achieve the maximum party unity, and he extended that to the increasingly embarrassing question of party democracy and the drive for a new formula under which party leaders are to be elected.'³²¹

Whilst in his victory speech Foot quoted Bevan in stating 'never underestimate the passion for unity in the Labour Party',³²² upon his election as leader he set about attempting to construct a shadow cabinet which was as reflective of the party as was possible but in doing so executed a number of tactically damaging decisions. Certainly making Healey both Deputy (ahead of the anticipated election) and shadow Foreign Secretary was testament to Foot trying to ensure a more balanced approach. Yet for those such as Rodgers, it appears that the catalyst for his break came with the election of Foot, Bishop's Stortford notwithstanding. For Rodgers, the election of Foot 'conveniently settled things.'³²³ Previously the Shadow Defence Secretary, Rodgers was to write that when Foot gave his shadow Defence portfolio to a member of CND, Brynmor John, this merely underlined the contempt that he felt that he and others on the right

³²⁰ Hattersley, *Who Goes Home?*, p.225

³²¹ Ian Aitken, 'Labour picks Foot to heal party splits', *The Guardian*, 11 November 1980, <https://www.theguardian.com/century/1980-1989/Story/0,,108171,00.html>, [accessed 25 January 2015]

³²² Benn, *The End of an Era: Diaries 1980-90*, p.46

³²³ Bill Rodgers, *Fourth Among Equals*, p.203

were held (and Morgan even refers to personal animosity between the two men).³²⁴ Rodgers admits that if Foot had offered him a significant position, he would have found it difficult later to leave the party, and would have remained to be 'desperately miserable throughout Labour's years of failure.'³²⁵ Yet as consequence Rodgers was to refuse all shadow posts, including Health and Northern Ireland and his self-imposed removal from the shadow cabinet ensured that he was replaced by Tony Benn (as a consequence of Benn having the next highest number of votes).

David Owen had previously declined to stand for the shadow cabinet and on 20 November 1980 wrote to Ron Hayward announcing his decision not to see election to the Labour Parliamentary Committee. Citing 'profound differences over a range of policies, particularly stemming from the 1980 Labour Conference,' Owen stated that he did not hold any personal feelings of animosity towards Foot and added that he believed 'that British politics has been invigorated by Tony Benn's readiness to stand up for his views.'³²⁶ Owen added that the Conference's policy decisions on Europe and unilateralism meant that he could not make his opposition to them known from the frontbenches 'in order, as I hope, to reverse the decisions of the Party.' Owen concluded with the warning that 'the next election is far from being won. We will not oust Mrs Thatcher and the Conservatives if we swing to the other extreme and not even a false unity will guarantee election victory'.³²⁷

For Benn, this was 'a great mistake', noting that 'The thing David will learn is that if you have no grass-root support – and he has none – going on to the back benches means you will simply sink into insignificance.'³²⁸ In this regard Benn was speaking from a position of knowledge, safe in the realisation that his support was based primarily in the constituencies

³²⁴ Morgan, *Michael Foot: A Life*, pp. 391-392

³²⁵ Bill Rodgers, *Fourth Among Equals*, p.204

³²⁶ Liverpool, University of Liverpool Special Collections and Archives Centre, David Owen Papers, D 709 2/17, Letter from David Owen to Ron Hayward, 20 November 1980

³²⁷ Liverpool, University of Liverpool Special Collections and Archives Centre, David Owen Papers, D 709 2/17, Letter from David Owen to Ron Hayward, 20 November 1980

³²⁸ Benn, *The End of an Era: Diaries 1980-90*, p.51

and that whilst he may have decided at the present time to not stand for the Shadow Cabinet, he was able to do so with from a position of relative strength. Benn was simply biding his time whereas Owen was now marking his and contemplation on leaving the Labour Party was hardening into something more determined.

For all his attempts at trying to hold the party together, Foot was to see the schism reach critical mass as a result of the Special Wembley Conference of 24 January 1981 to vote on the Electoral College. What Morgan referred to as 'a dreadful occasion in every respect, with vitriolic bitterness among many delegates towards the party right,'³²⁹ was also to see an unedifying fudge. The USDAW union motion defeated the alternative motion of the GMWU: the former's proposal would see the Unions holding 40 per cent of the college with the PLP and CLPs holding 30 per cent each. For the GMWU the proposed share was to be 50 percent for the PLP and 25 per cent for the Unions and CLPs.

For the right, this was a catastrophic blow. For those such as Owen this was the tipping point and underlined his growing frustration with 'people who ought to have known better' for their refusal to face up to the infiltration of Militant³³⁰ and whilst he was willing to remain and struggle for the cause of the right within the Labour Party, it was this lack of desire to fight and to back his intervention in the debate on unilateral disarmament that made his decision to leave becoming more certain.

Within twenty-four hours of the Wembley Conference decision, the Council for Social Democracy was being announced. By the beginning of 1981, Labour was in complete disarray. Within three months of Michael Foot becoming leader, elected by some for the hope for 'a quiet life', the Council for Social Democracy was born. The party was not only riven by factionalism but the possibility of defection of a significant number of its MPs.

³²⁹ Morgan, *Michael Foot: A Life*, p.393

³³⁰ David Owen, *Time to Declare* (London: Michael Joseph Ltd, 1991), p.432

Those on the right who were now actively considering a departure could see a clear way out and had a reasoned explanation for their leaving a party that, for many such as Rodgers, had been a part of their lives since their childhood. For them, the party was not 'theirs' anymore, it had ceased to be a coherent organisation and certainly not a Government in waiting. The hated Tribunites now had one of their own as leader of the party who had been a leading figure within the Bevanites, something which must have stuck in the craw of one-time Gaitskellites, even more so than when Wilson became leader. The move towards an anti-European policy and the adoption of unilateral nuclear disarmament were obvious and significant tilts at the right's shibboleths but the adoption of a fudged electoral college which provided an inbuilt majority for their opponents made the overcoming of these seemingly remote. Whereas in the past the right had suffered defeat over defence policy and Europe, whilst the PLP remained the driving force of the party such decisions could be reversed and overturned, as had happened during the time of Gaitskell. Now, with the introduction of a new Electoral College, such a prospect was not only uncertain but the ascendancy of policy being controlled by unions and CLPs dominated by a coalition of ultra-left factions was seemingly assured for perpetuity, regardless of Foot's comments that this would undoubtedly be challenged in the future.

The right had seemingly lost the ability to argue its case. Those such as Bill Rodgers had finally lost faith in thinking that a solution was possible and the situation retrievable. Rodgers was to write of how his 'impatience grew at the steady erosion of the will to fight', and how whilst Roy Hattersley, Merlyn Rees, Eric Varley and John Smith were of similar mindset to the defectors, they were not prepared to challenge the NEC or Unions.³³¹

Meanwhile, the left were seemingly continuing to be in the ascendant for the same reasons mentioned. The soft left as epitomised by the new party leader Michael Foot did not take such

³³¹ Rodgers, *Fourth Among Equals*, p.198

advances as a sign that their time had finally arrived. Instead there was a certain resignation and belief that this could be the high-water mark. Foot, attempting to be as conciliatory as leader of the Labour Party as he was as Leader of the House, was fully aware that the party could little afford to lose the right wing, not just in terms of the talent and personalities of those concerned but for the knowledge that their defections would reduce the party to a monotone entity. The former Bevanite knew from past experience that Labour had always been a party of competing and contradictory factions, as much held together with emotional impulses as with economic theory. Whilst Tony Benn had made similar observations of Labour's 'broad church' development, no such reservations were being expressed on the need for keeping the right within the party.

This 'broad church' which had been referenced was beginning to come apart. Referring again to the Jenkins opinion piece prior to the leadership election he had noted that 'differences of interest and ideology' had become 'so sharp and cut so deep that it is scarcely conceivable that they can be accommodated within new constitutional arrangements.'³³² Warning that 'sectional interests of the trade unions and the ideological zealotry of the constituency parties,' eroding the independence of the PLP, Jenkins said that it was only Healey who could prevent a split from occurring as 'it is not the Left who will split the party – it never has and it never will; it is the Right who will do so and it is in Parliament that the split will take place.'³³³ It would be Healey's victory the following year that was to prevent an even greater schism than the one that Labour was currently enduring and it would be the Soft Left and union machinations which were to come to the aid of those on the Right who were struggling to convince others to remain.

It would now be left to the remaining members of the right of the PLP to recover their ground. Manifesto and the CLV were effectively dead, the means of pursuing the goals of social democratic ideals within the Labour Party would have to be pursued via another vehicle but

³³² Peter Jenkins, 'Labour is pushed nearer disintegration,' *The Guardian*, 22 October 1980, p.15

³³³ Jenkins, 'Labour is pushed nearer disintegration,' *The Guardian*, 22 October 1980, p.15

the first act would be to steady the nerves of those who still remained at the time. The Unions, who had contributed to the crisis of the Electoral College were now about to set in motion the network required to shore up the support of the traditional right. *Marxism Today* was to observe that:

Fear of the constitutional headway made by the Left and fear of the effect of a breakaway on the party's electoral fortunes could well galvanise them in a way which all Wilson's and Callaghan's 'fixing' failed to do. Thus the irony may well be that the short term effect of the 'Gang of Four's' defection will be to strengthen Labour's Centre-Right.³³⁴

For the time being, for those on the right who observed the Council of Social Democracy with increasing alarm, such a prospect seemed remote.

³³⁴ 'Focus - Labour's Troubles', *Marxism Today*, March 1981, p.2, http://banmarchive.org.uk/collections/mt/index_frame.htm, [accessed 25 May 2014]

Chapter Three

Labour's Right in Crisis 1981 - 1983

Following the defeat in the general election, we should have picked ourselves up and sorted ourselves out. Instead we stayed on the floor, kicking hell out of each other, while Thatcher walked all over us.'

John Golding³³⁵

The General Election defeat of 1979 was to see Labour's Right thrown into disarray and the defection of a significant number of those who identified as Social Democrats was to further sow further seeds of doubt and despair. Whilst still nominally the largest chapter of the Parliamentary Labour Party, many of those who identified on the right of the party found themselves under increasing pressure. For some it was from their own CLPs who held strongly opposing opinions on policy; for others it was trying to justify their own reasoning for staying with Labour to those who were had begun to make the difficult break with the party. Whilst the breakaway of the Social Democrats was to be an existential crisis which had caused genuine anguish for some of those who were to leave, for those who chose to stay in the Labour Party it was a matter of tribal loyalty and in some cases the intellectually correct decision.

This chapter will focus on the period between 1981 and 1983 and examine why some on the Labour Party's right determined to stay within the party whilst others felt it necessary to leave it to join the Social Democrats. It also examines how those who remained in the Labour Party understood the reasons behind the SDP's formation and how this influenced their thinking. It

³³⁵ John Golding, *Hammer of the Left: Defeating Tony Benn, Eric Heffer and Militant in the Battle for the Labour Party* (London: Politico's Publishing Ltd, 2003), p.97

examines what they considered were the differences between their interpretations of social democracy, and how the Social Democrats interpreted it. What were the main differences between those who stayed and those who left? In doing so it will draw upon interviews with Giles Radice, Dianne Hayter and Austin Mitchell, as well as local activists in Oldham and Cambridge, with Oldham West being the seat of a Tony Benn supporter and where the concerns at the time were of Militant Tendency involvement and Cambridge a seat that was not only a marginal but one in which the newly formed Social Democrats hoped to make advances in.

The chapter will also critically assess the emergence of a slowly developing reaction against the Bennite Hard Left by the supporters of Michael Foot and show how the Tribunate group assisted with the stemming of further defections of MPs from the Labour right by abstaining on the vote for the Deputy Leadership elections, paving the way for the eventual establishment of a coalition of soft left and revisionist social democrats under the leadership of Neil Kinnock and Roy Hattersley.

The elections at Warrington, Crosby and Glasgow Hillhead are also examined. The SDP gained the latter marginal and returned its leader Roy Jenkins to the Commons after a six year absence on 25 March 1982. He was a man who many on the Labour right had once supported as a future leader yet was now heading the advance that threatened their movement. The victory at Hillhead was to be the highpoint of the SDP, if not the Alliance, as shown by the later reverse at Darlington on 24 March 1983, a reverse which for Labour gave false hope in thinking that such seats would remain in their hands yet for the SDP a portent of the limits of their electoral reach and how difficult it would be extending their appeal into traditional Labour heartlands.

Foot and the Social Democrats

Michael Foot's opinion of the right of the Labour Party may have been shaped from his experiences of the 1950s battles between the Bevanites and Gaitskellites but his time in Government had provided him with a closer working relationship with those for whom their policy positions were at odds with his own. Foot's adherence and sentimental attachment to both Parliament and the Labour Party placed him in a similar bracket as his predecessor James Callaghan but it was this sentiment which made his sincere entreaties to some, if not all, of those who were to leave the party all the more understandable.

Foot's opinion of some of the main leaders of the breakaway was one of contempt, with one notable exception. Foot's attempt to persuade Shirley Williams from leaving Labour were, as Morgan has noted, borne of a genuine admiration of her abilities as a Minister and also on a more sentimental basis in that she was the daughter of Vera Brittain.³³⁶ A former minister who was popular with the public and one who was seen as a capable administrator was someone whom Foot saw as an asset. Yet the developments of the last eighteen months were not to convince Williams of Foot's assurances that there would always be a place for those on the wing of the party that Williams resided, nor was the lack of action on the part of Healey, the one man on the Right where hopes had once been pinned. On 2 March 1981, nine members of Labour's representation in the Lords resigned the whip, stating their opposition to unilateralism, the proposal to leave the EEC and the Electoral College.³³⁷ This was in addition to the MPs who had already left the party shortly after Limehouse. A month later, any thoughts of conciliation were given little consideration as Foot attacked the SDP during his Ebbw Vale speech of 11 April, accusing the new party of dishonesty, mocking it for keeping its intentions

³³⁶ Kenneth O. Morgan, *Michael Foot: A Life* (London: Harper Perennial, 2007), p.393

³³⁷ Central Manchester, People's History Museum Archives, Michael Foot Papers, MF/L7/10/81, Letter to Michael Foot, 2 March 1981

secret until it 'made a deal with David Steel, once they've discovered what policy will prove most popular with the public opinion pollsters.'³³⁸

The dilemma for Foot was to attempt to forge an effective understanding between those on the Right and Left of the party in such a way as to not be seen as in thrall to one particular side. Unlike Wilson, who had been a Bevanite who had gradually moved to a more Labourist position or Callaghan who had been of the centre for most of his political career, Foot had been a radical from the outset. Whilst an extremely effective conciliator during his period in Government and in particular as Leader of the House, Foot's positions were such that were he to move in one particular direction he would be vilified. He was equally a prisoner of both and his leadership paralysed as a consequence, 'hated by the left, hated by the right...and he tried to sit in the middle,' as noted by one of his own supporters.³³⁹

Joyce Gould, who organised the party conferences in her role as National Agent, took the view that despite the 'nonsense' of the Electoral College and the issues of Europe and unilateralism, she was convinced that the breakaway was long gestating and that both Williams and Owen were organising the breakaway and operating 'a party within a party,' in much the same way as Militant.³⁴⁰

Frank Dobson, at that time a Benn supporter, said that whilst 'for all I know they may have been plotting for years', he was 'unaware of any suggestion of anybody wanting to breakaway after the 1979 General Election,' although the 'outward signs were looking a bit fragmentary,' and added his belief to the belief of certain Right-wing MPs voting for Foot over Healey as a means of triggering the split.³⁴¹ Dobson was particularly scathing in thinking that the reason why the break had not taken place sooner was due to those concerned 'being quite keen to holding on to their ministerial cars and ministerial salaries so the chances of them breaking

³³⁸ Michael White, 'Foot castigates the 'SDP Bubble', *The Guardian*, 11 April 1981, p.2

³³⁹ Interview with Joyce Gould, 10 December 2012

³⁴⁰ Interview with Joyce Gould, 10 December 2012

³⁴¹ Interview with Frank Dobson, 4 November 2014

away whilst we were in Government were pretty small.³⁴² Dobson viewed them as 'not on the Right of the party, they were sort of inside Right, there were a lot more Right-wing people who stayed within the Labour Party. There was an element of sort of fashionista, I think, about the SDP.'³⁴³

Neil Kinnock was similarly dismissive of those who left to form the SDP as a result of 'partly arrogance, partly delusion, partly frustration, partly laziness. And I say laziness because it would take a hell of a lot more to stay and fight their corner and make their argument than to cut loose.'³⁴⁴ He went further:

...they didn't really have the spirit, the determination, in the end the affection for and belief in the Labour Party to do that and took refuge in the view that this isn't the Labour Party I joined. It's never the bloody Labour Party you joined! That's called history, time moves on! The problem with the bloody party in many ways is that it was the Labour Party that you joined, it hadn't moved enough.³⁴⁵

This was a potent criticism even thirty years after the events of the breakaway, especially as those such as Rodgers had been involved in the party since an early age. Kinnock's feeling was that even after such a period that the desire to leave could only be as a result of a shallow attachment by those concerned, especially as those who came from the same wing of the party such as Roy Hattersley chose to stay. Kinnock's observation on the 'history' of the Labour Party was also telling as it suggests that Labour was not built upon a single idea or dogma, the party being as much a party of Hattersley as Benn, underling Kinnock's understanding of 'a pragmatic view'.

³⁴² Interview with Frank Dobson, 4 November 2014

³⁴³ Interview with Frank Dobson, 4 November 2014

³⁴⁴ Interview with Neil Kinnock, 18 January 2012

³⁴⁵ Interview with Neil Kinnock, 18 January 2012

For Gould, the policy standpoints of those who were to form and leave the SDP were indistinguishable from the Liberals. Gould noted that the defection of John Cartwright was particularly hurtful due to their personal friendship and that even one of her brothers joined the SDP. Yet despite the bitterness that was felt towards those who left, there was sympathy in that the Right felt that progress could not be made, particularly on the matter of the NEC's perceived failure of dealing with the issue of entryism. This was a charge that Gould makes towards the Soft Left (which as a self-identified 'Bevanite' she could be considered a member of) and that it took some time to accept that the matter had to be addressed, although adding that the defections actually made the expulsion of Militant all the more difficult as their defection had left the Right 'decimated'.³⁴⁶

Attempts at amelioration were made by some on the Left to those who were thinking of defecting to the new party. Writing in the *Labour Solidarity* newsletter of March 1981, the Tribune member Frank Field defined the debate as 'between those who believe in an outward looking democracy which tries to involve more and more people, and those who wish to impose a limited party democracy'. This was a debate that was required and worth having. It was also important that 'we on the Left...have to show by our actions, and not just by our talk, that tolerance is one of the major characteristics'.³⁴⁷

The immediate impact of the Social Democrats was not to be felt until the middle of the year and prior to the first engagement with the new party, Labour and Foot's first electoral test since the trauma of two years previously was a deceptively positive one. In early May of 1981, Labour performed relatively well at the local Government elections and the outcome was one in which he and the party could take some comfort from. Labour was to regain control of county authorities that it had lost in 1977 in the North and the West Midlands and in the case of Lancashire overturned a majority of 70 into a Labour administration with a majority of 8. Yet

³⁴⁶ Interview with Joyce Gould, 10 December 2012, p.2

³⁴⁷ 'How We See the Campaign', Radice and Field, pg.3, *Labour Solidarity*, No.1, Vol.1, March 1981,

such considerable victories were undermined by the poor performance in the South and East, with the Conservatives vote holding up.³⁴⁸ Moreover the Social Democrats had yet to put forward any candidates for local elections

The victory for Labour in the elections for the Greater London Council was to see it take control for the first time in 1977 and prior to the election Foot had said that a victory in London would be 'a great prelude to a Labour victory throughout the country.'³⁴⁹ On an average swing of 11 percent across the capital, Labour was returned with a majority of eight. This was affected by the loss of the seat in Norwood of the leader of Lambeth Council, Ted Knight, who saw a swing against him of 2.1% to the Conservatives. Although this was in part due to a combination of factors, including the unpopularity of the rate rises that had been implemented in Lambeth, it was also due to the standing of Stephen Haseler of the recently expelled Social Democratic Alliance who split the centre-left vote.³⁵⁰

Labour's performance outlined the fragility of their support in the aftermath of the SDP's formation. It had performed well in the local Government elections and yet Labour was now having to face the prospect of coming up against those who until five months previously had been in the same party. For the first time since the by-election of 1973 and the independent Democratic Labour candidacy of Dick Taverne in Lincoln, Labour was to face off against one of their former MPs.

Warrington

Foot was to be presented with the first of three by-election challenges that year which were to give an indicator of the damage the SDP's formation had wreaked upon their former colleagues. On 16 July 1981, Labour was forced to defend the seat of Warrington as the incumbent Thomas Williams stepped down in order to become a High Court Judge. This by-

³⁴⁸ John Carvel, 'Labour gains confirm the two nations theory', *The Guardian*, 9 May 1981, p.5

³⁴⁹ Paul Keel, 'Foot sees London poll as Tory test', *The Guardian*, 31 March 1981, p.3

³⁵⁰ John Carvel, 'Labour gains confirm the two nations theory', *The Guardian*, 9 May 1981, p.5

election, in a Labour stronghold in the industrial North-West of England, should have been both a much needed morale boost for Labour two years after the General Election defeat and an indicator of the unpopularity felt towards the Conservative Government. The outcome was to briefly underline the latter unpopularity of the Thatcher administration but it also cast a damning verdict on Labour itself. Roy Jenkins, the nominal leader of the Social Democrats (as no leader was officially in place at this time) used Warrington as the first attempt of providing an electoral test for the party, accepting the gauntlet that Foot had thrown down that those such as David Owen were to only undertake at the general election of 1983.

If there was an expectation of victory, then it must have been tempered by the realisation that this was an election that could have been avoided, with the revelation that Thomas Williams had suggested being moved to the Lords, a proposal apparently rejected by Foot.³⁵¹ If true then it could be interpreted as a tactical misjudgement by the Labour leader even if it underlined his antipathy to the upper chamber. This did, however, present Labour with an opportunity to crush the defectors' project before it could gain further traction. If, as John Campbell noted, 'politics is all about elections'³⁵² then Warrington was the opportunity that presented Labour with a potential fillip or possible disaster in equal measure.

Campbell describes the campaign conducted by Labour as one of 'personal ridicule and abuse,'³⁵³ with personal attacks made on Jenkins by the left-winger and member of the Labour NEC, Doug Hoyle, with the latter referring to the former as a 'Euro-fanatic'³⁵⁴. Whilst certainly unedifying it was in keeping with the tactical response that was put into place by the party in its efforts to effectively nullify the new party's prospects. Prior to Warrington, the Labour Party Research Department had produced an information paper the appendix of which was entitled 'The Gang Show' which set out both the background to the SDP and the perceived prospects

³⁵¹ Hugh Stephenson, *Claret and Chips: Rise of the S.D.P.* (London: Michael Joseph Ltd, 1982), p.57

³⁵² John Campbell, *Roy Jenkins: A Well-Rounded Life* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2014), p.580

³⁵³ Campbell, *Roy Jenkins: A Well-Rounded Life*, p.579

³⁵⁴ Dennis Johnson, 'SDP will fail, according to Hoyle', *The Guardian*, 30 June 1981, p.2

of the party, placing it in the context of other breakaways which had taken place previously. The paper quoted Neil Kinnock's summation of the Social Democrats as 'the malleable Common Market, NATO worshipping, Trade Union bashing, PSBR saving, permanent PR Coalition that every multinational boss, judge and general has longed for!'³⁵⁵ Labour's campaign made strong and persistent mention of the pro-Europeanism of the SDP in general and Jenkins in particular, with Peter Shore making reference to 'sick, overriding passion for the Common Market,' and in the process attacking those still in Labour who still wished for Britain to remain in the EEC.³⁵⁶ Labour's campaign was also hit by the personal intervention of the retiring candidate's son, David Williams, attacking the candidacy of Hoyle and his 'extreme Left-wing policies. They are totally against those which my father supported for 20 years.'³⁵⁷ This in turn prompted the Cheshire Trade Union Action Committee which was supporting Hoyle to refer to Jenkins as 'that pompous plutocrat,'³⁵⁸ who is now showing his true anti-working class views.'³⁵⁹

The result at Warrington was a pyrrhic victory for Labour. In a seat it was expected to win a comfortable margin of victory would have been so expected as to be un-newsworthy and any attention would have focused on the failure of the SDP to make any headway. What occurred was the outcome Labour feared the most short of defeat itself, with Jenkins reducing a majority of 10,000 to 1,759 and taking 42 per cent of the vote.³⁶⁰ As Jenkins was to note himself, it was 'the lowest Labour vote in this constituency for fifty years,'³⁶¹ a considerable achievement for a party which, Liberal Party organisation notwithstanding, had no local presence and a

³⁵⁵ Labour Party Information Paper, 'The Gang Show', May 1981, p.13, Michael Foot papers, MF/L27/13, People's History Museum, and Guardian, 17th February 1981. See also Kinnock's letter to the Guardian, Letters to the Editor, *The Guardian*, 17 February 1981, p.10

³⁵⁶ Campbell, *Roy Jenkins: A Well-Rounded Life*, p.579

³⁵⁷ Dennis Johnson, 'Extremist' Hoyle attacked in SDP thrust on Labour', Johnson, *The Guardian*, 2 July 1981, p.4

³⁵⁸ Dennis Johnson, 'Extremist' Hoyle attacked in SDP thrust on Labour', Johnson, *The Guardian*, 2 July 1981, p.4

³⁵⁹ David Williams had also been touted as a potential candidate for the SDP in Warrington which may have provided a more local significance to the campaign and further embarrassment for Labour; 'Wavering on Warrington', *The Guardian* 5th June, 1981, p.12

³⁶⁰ Campbell, *Roy Jenkins: A Well-Rounded Life*, p.580

³⁶¹ Campbell, *Roy Jenkins: A Well-Rounded Life*, p.580

candidate who had been out of Parliament for five years. Whilst it was to be a victory for Labour, the very fact that a party that had not been in existence six months earlier was to come within touching distance of victory underlined the predicament Labour and Foot were now facing. The editorial in the *Daily Express*, not one for demonstrating a sympathetic view towards Labour, said that the party and Foot in particular faced 'the serious possibility that his Party might soon vanish from the scene as a party of Government...and that and to a large extent they are due to his own failure as a leader,' adding that faced with a Conservative Government that was deeply unpopular due to massive unemployment, Labour 'should be making hay. Instead it can barely hold on to what was one of the safest seats in the country.'³⁶²

Foot was damaged by Warrington. The defeat of Jenkins had only served to burnish the credentials of Jenkins whom they had tried to paint as an elitist and the possibility of the SDP making headway in traditional Labour areas. Labour saw one in five of its voters in 1979 shift to the SDP and prompted Peter Jenkins to observe that the party had 'lost touch with its mass support. Its leaders command little confidence or respect,' adding that it 'seems to be in the throes of an internal revolution which has developed its own momentum, unsusceptible to such rude reminders as Warrington.'³⁶³

The 'throes' of which Jenkins referred to were to become convulsions, made all the more debilitating with the feverish speculation and recriminations that was to take place over the Summer months and culminate at the next Party Conference.

Benn and the Deputy leadership Campaign

In the immediate aftermath of the Warrington by-election, the fortunes of Labour had appeared to have stabilised. A Gallup poll from 20th August 1981 showed that Labour were on 38.5 percent, ten percent ahead of the Conservatives and double that showing for the Social

³⁶² Opinion, 'Foot on the spot', *Daily Express*, 21 July 1981, p.8

³⁶³ Peter Jenkins, 'A political earthquake that shook the system', *The Guardian*, 18 July 1981, p.17

Democrats on 19 percent.³⁶⁴ Whilst it was not as considerable as the lead that had been in evidence at the end of February, Labour was still leading the Government by a significant margin and whilst bruised by the encounter at Warrington they had managed to hold on to the seat. The hope that further defections may have been stymied was high, in spite of the newspapers continuing to impress the advances made by SDP in local elections such as the victories in Lambeth, Cleveland and Hemel Hempstead.³⁶⁵

In the face of a relatively stable period, Foot's attempts at limiting the loss of any further MPs from the Right of the party were to be made all the more difficult by the determination of Tony Benn to press ahead with his plan to run for the Deputy leadership. Speculation on whether Benn would make the decision to stand had been running throughout the year. It was this speculation which was to bring the widening rift within the Labour Left out into the open. As has already been commented upon, the decision to elect Denis Healey as Labour's Deputy Leader had been viewed as the moment that halted the advance of Tony Benn's ambitions. For Giles Radice and others it was to be viewed with no small amount of emotion and appreciable hyperbole that this 'saved' the Labour Party in that it held up a possible exodus of MPs from the Right of the party to join the Social Democrats. Prior to the Warrington by-election, Radice had written an article in which he had rebutted Michael Meacher's justification for Benn's candidacy, declaring that Benn had 'become a divisive figure within the Labour movement...his refusal to consult all except his closest associates and his complete inability to compromise have alienated him from most of the Parliamentary Labour Party including many within the Tribune group.'³⁶⁶ Such sentiments could have been expected from a member of the Right but they were to be echoed in due course by others on the Left.

The rhetoric utilised by some of Benn's supporters in the wider Labour Movement was to exacerbate divisions on the Left. In August 1981 Arthur Scargill had called upon all those who

³⁶⁴ 'SDP support up', *The Guardian*, 20 August 1981, p.22

³⁶⁵ Colin Brown, 'SDP onslaught crushes safe Labour seats,' *The Guardian*, 25 July 1981, p.3

³⁶⁶ Giles Radice, 'The Leadership bid that could damage the party,' *The Guardian*, 18 May 1981, p.9

saw themselves as being on the Labour Left to vote for Benn for Deputy and to do otherwise would be seen as support for the party's Right-wing. This prompted a Left-wing MEP, Janey Buchanan, to strongly criticise Scargill and demand Benn rein in such supporters:

Once honest dissent is attacked and its attackers left unchallenged, there is no holding back the forces of reaction. Reactionary ideas hiding behind a Left label are and should be terrifying to any Socialist.³⁶⁷

An interview with Maurice and David Kogan after the 1981 Party Conference had seen Audrey Wise call on those who were sympathetic to the Social Democrats to leave and again attacked the Wilson and Callaghan administrations: 'the sooner they go the better because the trouble with these people is that they are very much identified with the last Labour Government and previous Labour Governments who betrayed the working people of this country.'³⁶⁸ Such antagonism was not shared by another member of the left, Nigel Stanley³⁶⁹, whom the Kogans recorded as saying that other than Owen and Williams he had no wish for anyone to leave, observing that democracy meant that 'sometimes people win and sometimes people lose and that goes for all different parts of the party,' then offering the hopeful assertion that 'in five years' time everything will have settled down and there will essentially be a working relationship between the different trends in the party as has happened in the French Socialist Party.'³⁷⁰ The Kogans also noted that Stanley hoped that 'the right should not now be driven away' just as the left were not forced to when they had 'persistently lost.'³⁷¹

Criticism of Benn's motives for running and those issuing threats to those who were thinking of abstaining were to help to harden the views of those already sceptical if not opposed to Benn's decision to stand. Christopher Hitchens noted that those such as Buchan mentioned

³⁶⁷ Ian Aitken, 'Benn asked to disown allies' "Gulag" tactics"', *The Guardian*, August 7 1981, p.22

³⁶⁸ David Kogan and Maurice Kogan, *The Battle for the Labour Party* (London: Harper Collins, 1982), p.144

³⁶⁹ Nigel Stanley was to become Research Assistant to Robin Cook.

³⁷⁰ Kogan and Maurice Kogan, *The Battle for the Labour Party* p.145

³⁷¹ Kogan and Maurice Kogan, *The Battle for the Labour Party*, p.145

above saw their criticisms as being of the 'near-adulation of Mr Benn among young activists' as 'Stalinism' adding that there were some others within the Tribune Group including Eric Heffer who resented Benn as a 'Johnny come-lately' and others still who had come to view Benn as a potential electoral liability.³⁷²

Neil Kinnock was to receive opprobrium from Benn supporters for his lack of support for the latter's endeavours. In one reply to a letter received in September 1981, Kinnock accused Benn's campaign of being a distraction and giving credence to Healey:

Denis Healey is not (the emphasis is Kinnock's) a significant power in the Labour Party and the only thing which has made him important and given him a chance to wound if not defeat our policies is this foolish deputy leadership election.

I am sorry that we cannot agree but frankly the only way in which I can demonstrate the strength of my feeling that perpetual conflict is damaging any possibility of winning an election and therefore of implementing our policies is by abstention.³⁷³

Benn's persistence in running for the Deputy leadership was to be the catalyst for the eventual painful break that was to emerge in the Tribune Group of MPs. Whilst his defeat was, in retrospect, seen a huge achievement for some of his supporters as they did not even envisage the margin to be so narrow, it was also a crushing disappointment. It would be another thirty-four years until someone from the hard left would transcend the result that was achieved in 1981. Whilst Benn had managed to achieve eighty per cent of the CLP votes, forty percent of the union ballots and a third of the PLP vote³⁷⁴, the defeat was marked by the machinations of those whom had once allied themselves with Benn. That the so-called soft Left supporters of Kinnock, et al, abstained was to be viewed as the biggest perceived act of treachery. Neil

³⁷² Christopher Hitchens, 'The left jab that could floor Tony Benn,' *The Times*, 21 September 1981, p.8

³⁷³ Cambridge, Churchill College, Kinnock Papers, Churchill Archives, KNNK 2/1/6, Letter from Neil Kinnock to Bob Hughes, 3 October 1981

³⁷⁴ Colin Leys and Leo Pannitch, *The End of Parliamentary Socialism: From New Left to New Labour* (London: Verso, 2001), p.199

Kinnock was to receive a large number of letters from Benn supporters denouncing his decision to abstain. One letter dated 3rd October 1981 addressed to 'Comrade Kinnock', said that it was 'pleased to tell you that you have been awarded the 1981 Ramsay MacDonald Prize for loyalty in the services of socialism. Last year's winner was S. Williams.'³⁷⁵ One undated letter made the same comparison to the one-time Labour prime minister and said that he would not join Labour 'WHILE IT IS LED BY PINK TORIES AND LIBERALS', adding 'God being good will someday forgive you your treachery the ordinary people of this country never will.'³⁷⁶ Another correspondent demanded that all of Labour's policies would be implemented 'if we unite around Tony Benn' and 'no Jims or Harolds will do deals to renege yet again (emphasis is the letter writer's).' The writer then took aim at Kinnock for joining with 'Silkin, Healey even Heffer' for not getting behind Benn, accusing them of being "'stab in the backers" and careerists', before finally suggesting that 'they can all join the S.D.P's (sic) if they like Mr Healey's brand of socialism, it may even appeal to you boyo.'³⁷⁷

In one reply to such a letter, dated 19 October 1981, Kinnock stated that 'Labour Party policies belong to the Labour Movement, they are too important to rely on the mere cult of personality,' adding that his loyalties were to 'the Labour Movement and to Michael Foot who I strongly campaigned for in the Leadership Campaign and, it is my opinion, it is Michael Foot who "needs all the support he can get."³⁷⁸ In another letter also dated from 19th October, Kinnock again makes reference to the adulation afforded to Tony Benn saying 'it was precisely the "St Peter", "Judas", "Christ" attitudes which were (and are) prevalent in certain sections of the

³⁷⁵ Cambridge, Churchill College Archives, Kinnock papers, KNNK 2/1/6, Letter from Anthony Easthope to Neil Kinnock, undated

³⁷⁶ Cambridge, Churchill College Archives, Kinnock papers, KNNK 2/1/6, Letter from Stephen Calraw to Neil Kinnock, undated

³⁷⁷ Cambridge, Churchill College Archives, Kinnock papers, KNNK 2/1/6, Letter from Neil Kinnock to Dennis Lanner, 19 October 1981

³⁷⁸ Cambridge, Churchill College Archives, Kinnock papers, KNNK 2/1/6, Letter from Neil Kinnock to John Millar, 19 October 1981

Party and which place undue and destructive emphasis on personality rather than policies that I was (and am) so firmly against.³⁷⁹

The campaign for the deputy leadership would ultimately lead to some of Benn's supporters to become disillusioned. Frank Dobson was to reflect thirty-three years later that supporting Benn was 'the only thing in my political life that I'm ashamed of,' adding that 'Benn was never as fundamentally committed as Michael Foot was,' seeing Benn as 'superficial.'³⁸⁰

For Foot the outcome was one that he welcomed. Peter Jenkins, writing in *The Guardian* at the time, proffered the opinion that the victory of Healey had ushered in 'an embryonic coalition between the soft-Left Tribunites and the Centre-Right Solidarity faction.'³⁸¹³⁸² Jenkins offered the caveat that such a coalition was at best fragile and if borne of expediency for the present time it was a necessary requirement, forged on a common readiness to 'Democratise the electoral college, and the unions, in so far as that can be done.'³⁸³ What the defeat of Benn had returned was the equilibrium that had been unsettled with the defections of the Social Democrats, even if that balance was currently composed in the favour of the soft-Left over the traditional Right. If the balance was still in danger of being upset by the tensions caused by the policies on unilateralism and EEC membership then for the present time at least such a pause in hostilities mean that Labour could take stock. Unfortunately what the party was presented with over the next two months was to be chastening.

³⁷⁹ Cambridge, Churchill College Archives, Kinnock papers, KNNK 2/1/6, Letter from Neil Kinnock to John Millar, 19 October 1981

³⁸⁰ Interview with Frank Dobson, 4 November 2014

³⁸¹ Peter Jenkins, 'Michael Foot's sharp slap with an olive branch for Tony Benn', *The Guardian*, 30 September 1981, p.13

³⁸² Peter Jenkins, whilst making the wider point of the 'coalition', does not take into account the membership of some of the Left in the Solidarity group, as noted above.

³⁸³ Peter Jenkins, 'Michael Foot's sharp slap with an olive branch for Tony Benn', *The Guardian*, 30 September 1981, p.13

The Right Reacts

Labour had experienced bitterness and animosity within the different factions Parliamentary Party as opposition chafed against the tenuous bonds that held it together. The tumultuous events that led to the Limehouse Declaration was to see old friendships and collaborations fall apart, at times almost boiling over into physical violence. The Labour Right had marshalled together its members since the early 1960s with the Campaign for Democratic Socialism and latterly with the Manifesto Group as means of initially ensuring that their policies were adopted by the party before latterly acting as a protective buffer for the Callaghan Government and as a bulwark against the rising power of the Left. Now as the Council for Social Democracy was being announced, the resentment that had been building boiled over. Any animosity towards the SDP was to be expected by those of the Left yet it was to be strongest when expressed by those whom only relatively recently were close colleagues of MPs that had recently defected. There was contempt - for Denis Healey, the SDP was wedded to a 'fantasy...of a society administered by men of competence and goodwill – a sort of irreversible Butskellism based on the rejection of career politicians and of bureaucrats.'³⁸⁴ There were also those who sympathised with those who were suffering difficulties with their constituency parties.

Dianne Hayter recalled the feelings and anger that was experienced at party meetings. During this period Hayter was with the Fabians and remembered the 'contempt for the electorate' and 'bitterness towards people like me' in party meetings from far left activists which had stopped people from attending party meetings and use of invective such as 'traitors' in relation to members of the former Government.³⁸⁵ Hayter found the defections of Shirley Williams - 'born into this movement' - and William Rodgers - 'in it from a youngster, CDS since the time of Labour' – as proof of the pressures that they must have felt and was convinced that they were 'psychologically still Labour.'³⁸⁶ Hayter, unlike Hattersley, 'would open my arms willingly to

³⁸⁴ Michael White, 'Healey warns of SDP ' threat', *The Guardian*, 5 November 1981, p.6

³⁸⁵ Interview with Dianne Hayter, 24 October 2014

³⁸⁶ Interview with Dianne Hayter, 24 October 2014

them' if they were allowed to return and also noted that 'a number of people who I'm not going to name who have said to me and particularly after reading the book (*Fightback!*) had I knew then what I know, that the unions were beginning to do it, then I might not have gone.'³⁸⁷

Hayter recalled the sadness of the loss of association with those whom until recently had been friends such as John Cartwright and John Grant and in particular when Colin Beaver and John Roper left to join the SDP. Roper who had been treasurer of the Fabians and Beaver who had been something of a mentor of Hayter's both also had partners who worked within the Fabians and when the defections took place it was particularly painful, 'than being screamed at by a group of people I didn't respect.'³⁸⁸

The failure of the right of the PLP and the unions to connect was due to 'MPs being completely spineless' according to Hayter, only organising in Parliament and ignorant of the unions who were looking for political leadership.³⁸⁹ For Hayter, 'a good General Secretary would have reached out to the unions but both Ron Hayward and Jim Mortimer were the wrong people to do it'³⁹⁰ due to being 'in hock to the NEC'³⁹¹ that was dominated by the left. As a result there was a sense that the union leaders had to step in and help which led to the gathering of the St Ermin's Group. For Hayter the union leaders 'had the data' showing that their members were not voting Labour and this moved them to organise matters and provide support for groups to come such as Labour Solidarity.

There was also a brief period of concern that the Fabians could be cultivated by the SDP and as Dianne Hayter recalled for 'a couple of days it was horrendous' as two of her staff members left and Dick Leonard, who had defected, had appealed for SDP members to be allowed to

³⁸⁷ Interview with Dianne Hayter, 24 October 2014

³⁸⁸ Interview with Dianne Hayter, 24 October 2014

³⁸⁹ Interview with Dianne Hayter, 24 October 2014

³⁹⁰ Interview with Dianne Hayter, 24 October 2014

³⁹¹ Interview with Dianne Hayter, 24 October 2014

remain in the Fabians. In due course things 'steadied very quickly,' and the Fabians voted to deny SDP members to remain, prompting the latter to form the short-lived Tawney Society.³⁹²

Recollecting events from over thirty years previously, Giles Radice said that as far as he was concerned there was never any prospect of leaving Labour for the SDP, only the alternative of leaving politics altogether:

They were older than me (Williams and Rodgers), I was not attracted by their idea of moving out, leaving the Labour Party. I think it was partly because I was sentimental about the Labour Party, I joined it...it was a big move for me to join it in the first place I wasn't hereditary. I thought it could be won round, it would take a long time – they didn't.³⁹³

Radice added it was a sentimental, 'tribal loyalty but it was a tribal loyalty to a tribe that I wasn't born into, it was an intellectual commitment.'³⁹⁴ Kinnock, added Radice, would have felt it was *his* tribe from a young age but for him it became one that he felt he belonged to.

Radice said when the defections were underway it was 'dreadful seeing them leaving', and that in the meantime he was being attacked by 'Trots' calling him a 'traitor' and expected to leave, 'deliberately targeted by the Rank and File Mobilising Committee' for deselection but had managed to hold on, saying that some of the members 'loved me taking on the Trots!' and 'dismantling their intellectual argument.'³⁹⁵

Austin Mitchell, at the time of the interview still MP for Great Grimsby, disregarded the threat of Militant, considering them to be 'a nuisance',³⁹⁶ but acknowledged that the mood at the two conferences at Wembley coupled with the Mitchell put forward the suggestion that William

³⁹² Interview with Dianne Hayter, 24 October 2014

³⁹³ Interview with Giles Radice, 28 November 2012

³⁹⁴ Interview with Giles Radice, 28 November 2012

³⁹⁵ Interview with Giles Radice, 28 November 2012

³⁹⁶ Interview with Austin Mitchell, 4 November 2014

Rodgers was the most hesitant to leave and was more concerned about defence than the others were about Europe. For Mitchell he was as unforgiving towards the SDP, even though he found some of the policies attractive barring the ones on Europe and proportional representation, and this resentment was still evident thirty years later:

It certainly damaged us, I couldn't forgive them. Because...all its faults with the Labour Party, its right to combat trade union dominance in the Labour Party, a kind of machine politics we get up to, but on the other hand it is the only instrument for social advance and the only instrument that could change society and to destroy it as they wanted to...to think of leaving it and wrecking it was unforgivable.³⁹⁷

Mitchell thought that whilst the defection strengthened the left initially, it did not weaken the social liberal element within the party, stating that he did not think it had changed all.³⁹⁸ Following on from this, Mitchell, still considering himself as a Gaitskellite in 2014, also thought that the reason why his predecessor as MP for Great Grimsby Anthony Crosland would have remained within the party had he have lived was down to a deep loyalty, similar to that expressed by Giles Radice. This assumption of Mitchell's in relation to Crosland was as given by David Marquand:

His (Crosland's) loyalty to it was not, as party loyalty so often is, a superficial matter of convenience, or habit or personal ties. It sprang from the deepest recesses of his complex character. For him, breaking from the Labour Party was unthinkable.³⁹⁹

Mitchell believed that had Crosland stayed it would have been due to a loyalty to the Labour Party but also due to his agnosticism on the matter of Europe which was one of the primary issues for those who defected. Mitchell also suggested the same would have been true of

³⁹⁷ Interview with Austin Mitchell, 4th November 2014

³⁹⁸ Interview with Austin Mitchell, 4 November 2014

³⁹⁹ David Marquand, *The Progressive Dilemma: From Lloyd George to Blair (Second Edition)*, (London: Phoenix Giant, 1999), p.177

High Gaitskell.⁴⁰⁰ Loyalty was the driving factor for Mitchell, pointing to Roy Hattersley who was more pro-European and a multilateralist yet had remained to the party.

Paul McHugh, who was to become a Labour activist in the early 1980s in the constituency of Cambridge, recounted his involvement in a local by-election at the end of 1981 in the Romsey ward and said it was 'an eye-opener' as Labour had an 'iron grip since 1918' and the election was therefore 'symbolic'.⁴⁰¹ McHugh recalled that the weather for the by-election was very poor and that there were canvassers and activists for the SDP many of whom were in cars and able to take the elderly voters to the polling booths. Labour lost the by-election and as a consequence McHugh decided to join the party, feeling that what 'the Labour Party does not want to do is lose the middle classes, it's a progressive alliance, it doesn't want to lose the progressive middle classes.'⁴⁰²

McHugh recalled the atmosphere of his first branch meeting and that there was 'a strong antipathy towards the SDP' amongst those gathered

The Branch activists were people who had been confronted with the SDP and the possibility of joining and had decided not to do so, so they were pretty hostile. Not personally hostile but there was a strong feeling that it was a dead end and it wasn't the way to go. And I think people were much of a muchness, what I'd call Hattersleyite social democrats...imbued in a belief in public service, in the power of the state to make things better for people, and you might say a sense of a bit of *noblesse oblige*, a feeling that you ought to look after those who were less well off than yourself.⁴⁰³

For McHugh the Cambridge Labour Party 'wasn't badly split' but he said that people had left, recalling a letter from a former member from the right of the party called Paddy Geoghan who

⁴⁰⁰ Interview with Austin Mitchell, 4 November 2014

⁴⁰¹ Interview with Paul McHugh, 16 January 2016

⁴⁰² Interview with Paul McHugh, 16 January 2016

⁴⁰³ Interview with Paul McHugh, 16 January 2016

denounced the Labour Party as 'middle-class and homosexual loving.'⁴⁰⁴ McHugh's recollection of the members who would have classed themselves as either being the more progressively liberal members of Cambridge Labour and more traditional working class trade unionists was 'split evenly' and that the social liberals did not feel alienated as a consequence of the SDP defecting.

Entryism from Militant was also not at the time a concern according to McHugh and aside from Cambridge undergraduates selling the *Militant* newspaper – 'the Trots weren't an issue.'⁴⁰⁵ McHugh had 'absolutely no sympathy to the Gang of Four' particularly as Healey and Hattersley remained in the party.⁴⁰⁶ When asked if the victory of Healey over Benn saved the party as per the opinions of those such as Giles Radice, McHugh said that that with the benefit of hindsight that 'Radice is probably right' although not feeling any particular concern at the time.⁴⁰⁷

In Oldham West, later to be Oldham West and Royton, which was the seat of Michael Meacher and a member of the left-wing Campaign Group of MPs, three activist members recalled that unlike Cambridge the issue that concerned them was infiltration of 'the trots' rather than the SDP having any impact.⁴⁰⁸ Jeremy Sutcliffe had been councillor for Werneth Ward for three years between 1971 and 1974 and latterly CLP Secretary for Oldham West until 1984. John Battye was councillor for Failsworth East ward during this period later to be leader of Oldham Metropolitan Council. Steve Garry had been an activist since the early 1980s, something that all three men continued to be during the time of the interview in November 2015. None of those interviewed would necessarily classify themselves from the right of the party, with Battye and Garry likely to identify from the soft left, but what was evident was that all three had been activists in support of a Bennite candidate in Michael Meacher yet had concerns over Militant

⁴⁰⁴ Interview with Paul McHugh, 16 January 2016

⁴⁰⁵ Interview with Paul McHugh, 16 January 2016

⁴⁰⁶ Interview with Paul McHugh, 16 January 2016

⁴⁰⁷ Interview with Paul McHugh, 16 January 2016

⁴⁰⁸ Interview with John Battye, Steve Garry and Jeremy Sutcliffe, 15 November 2015

infiltration. For Jeremy Sutcliffe, recalling events in 1983 'I was CLP Secretary and (it was) picked up that there would be a hit by Militant on me in the normally quiet ward of Warneth...I survived it but the pressure was there from the Trots but it was never as apparent or problematical in Oldham West as the fairly well-organised group that was in Oldham East.'⁴⁰⁹

John Battye said that there was a strong sense of the SDP as being 'turncoats' and 'traitors' and that if had not been for Shirley Williams 'would have collapsed,'⁴¹⁰ giving that as a reason for the new party not gaining as many members in the North-West. For Battye Healey was a popular choice even though as Jeremy Sutcliffe added Oldham West was disposed to Tony Benn because of the links through Michael Meacher.⁴¹¹ Battye said that there was a sense of injustice at the way Healey had lost the leadership saying people thought 'we can't let Denis go through that again.'⁴¹² Sutcliffe added that there remained antipathy towards the SDP because 'the first past post system showed that to split the left-wing vote was wrong.'⁴¹³ It was fatal.⁴¹⁴

Labour Solidarity

In the immediate aftermath of the Limehouse Declaration of January 1981, the Labour right had to set about reorganising those remaining MPs into a cohesive and unified unit in the face of a triumphant left which was now seemingly all powerful within the leadership, the NEC and the CLPs. The man most closely associated with organisation on the Labour right, William Rodgers, had not only left for the SDP but had been one of its founding fathers. Rodgers had been one of if not the organisational driving force behind centre-right groupings since the time

⁴⁰⁹ Interview with John Battye, Steve Garry and Jeremy Sutcliffe, 15 November 2015

⁴¹⁰ Interview with John Battye, Steve Garry and Jeremy Sutcliffe, 15 November 2015

⁴¹¹ Interview with John Battye, Steve Garry and Jeremy Sutcliffe, 15 November 2015

⁴¹² Interview with John Battye, Steve Garry and Jeremy Sutcliffe, 15 November 2015

⁴¹³ Interview with John Battye, Steve Garry and Jeremy Sutcliffe, 15 November 2015

⁴¹⁴ John Battye added an anecdote in which he 'was convinced' that Denis Healey had said that 'Labour would squeeze them until the pips squeaked,' something later denied. 'I'm sure he did, we were on our feet cheering!'

of the CDS in the 1960s and the Campaign for Labour Victory and the Manifesto Group of MPs in the 1970s.⁴¹⁵

The result was Labour Solidarity which was to be jointly led by Roy Hattersley and Peter Shore. Mitchell, who was Treasurer, observed that as they set the group up the purpose of Labour Solidarity was two-fold: to defeat Militant and to stop further defections to the SDP.⁴¹⁶ Dianne Hayter stated that Shore's involvement was 'very important' as the group needed someone who was anti-European (and that Shore was 'having a very difficult time in Tower Hamlets'), although it was not the matter of Europe that was the issue but merely survival.⁴¹⁷

When recollecting later in 1981 on those returning defectors at the start of the 1990s, Roy Hattersley was to say that he 'thought less about the remote possibility of a reunion with the SDP than about the urgent necessity of hanging on to those moderate Labour supporters who, true to the spirit of 1961, were prepared to stay and fight for the party they love.'⁴¹⁸ For Hattersley his aim was to convince those of his colleagues who were minded to leave for the new Social Democrats that 'the cause of sensible socialism was not lost forever. And it was to demonstrate that reason remained, as well as to fight the internal battles against mindless extremism.'⁴¹⁹ The consequence of this was the founding of Labour Solidarity, a new group of MPs, peers and councillors which from the beginning were not wholly recruited from the Labour right.

Jeremy Sutcliffe and John Battye recalled that although Roy Hattersley came and attended a social event for Labour Solidarity in Oldham, Michael Meacher as one of the local MPs and Campaign member was not critical of its taking place.⁴²⁰

⁴¹⁵ 'Arrival of the Fourth Man', *The Observer*, 10 January 1982, p.11

⁴¹⁶ Interview with Austin Mitchell, 4 November 2014

⁴¹⁷ Interview with Dianne Hayter, 24 October 2014

⁴¹⁸ Roy Hattersley, *Who Goes Home?: Scenes from a Political Life* (London: Little, Brown and Company, 1995), p.235

⁴¹⁹ Hattersley, *Who Goes Home?*, p.235

⁴²⁰ Interview with John Battye, Steve Garry and Jeremy Sutcliffe, 15 November 2015

What was ultimately crucial was that whilst some of the more Labour right-wing trade union leaders such as Frank Chappell of the E.E.P.T.U. (Electrical, Electronic, Telecommunications and Plumbing Union) may have been initially supportive of the Council of Social Democracy, as Lewis Minkin notes it was to be Conservative legislation which confirmed the unions' hostility to the SDP.⁴²¹ This was borne out particularly when Bill Rodgers trumped even Norman Tebbit with a stern demand for trade union members to "contract in" rather than "contract out". That certainly represented a far cry from the views of the GMWU sponsored candidate who had first fought and won Stockton-on-Tees twenty years earlier.⁴²²

Hayter recalled that she had been worried about MPs defecting from the Labour Party but never the trade unions disaffiliating and joining the SDP, even if they were sympathetic to the ideals. Frank Chappell, as already mentioned, fell into this category but

having got the Communists out and got us back into the mainstream he wasn't going anywhere, he was a working class lad, actually. And somehow I knew that, I was worried about MPs but I never worried about a union. And of course it helped that they did set up the St Ermin's Group straight away that really helped solidify that. I don't think any of the smaller unions thought about it, this was our party.⁴²³

The SDPs failure to cultivate either those MPs who may have been sympathetic to a decoupling of the union link (such as Radice) or the unions themselves meant that whilst they were able to set themselves as different from Labour as a consequence it further underlined that the accusation that they were rootless and elitist. Labour's attacks on the SDP were to provide the right with the opportunity to lead on an issue knowing that it would have the left in support. Denis Healey made a speech in West Bromwich (referred to as 'a vintage burst of

⁴²¹ Lewis Minkin, *The Contentious Alliance: Trade Unions and the Labour Party* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1992), p.226

⁴²² 'Arrival of the Fourth Man', *The Observer*, 10 January 1982, p.11

⁴²³ Interview with Dianne Hayter, 24 October 2014

abuse'⁴²⁴ by *The Guardian*'s Michael White) in which he referred to the SDP as 'a Mark II Tory Party after a year of "frantic opportunism", in which they had adopted then dropped policies the moment they looked like they were losing votes.'⁴²⁵ Similarly, Roy Hattersley said that the 'decision to support what he called blatantly anti-union legislation revealed the two most "ugly aspects" of the SDP – opportunism and conservatism aimed at picking up a few suburban votes.'⁴²⁶

It would be a welcome opportunity for the Labour right to turn their fire for once on their former colleagues yet the following month would see the SDP return it with a vengeance.

Hillhead and its aftermath

The by-election for Glasgow Hillhead was one which was a genuine three-way marginal: at the 1979 General Election, the Conservative candidate Sir Thomas Galbraith held the seat with just over two thousand votes with Labour finishing second. Galbraith had recently died and had held the seat for thirty-three years and Glasgow Hillhead was the last remaining Conservative constituency in the city.⁴²⁷ As Ian Aitken in *The Guardian* observed the SDP vote in Scotland was not as strong as it was in England, even if the Labour vote had dropped to forty percent there in late December 1981 from fifty-two earlier that same year.⁴²⁸ It therefore took some persuading for Roy Jenkins to stand in the by-election, made all the more difficult with the continuing disagreements between the SDP and the Liberals over the selection of candidates.⁴²⁹

Jenkins decision to stand in Hillhead was therefore a considerable gamble: lose and he would have suffered two successive defeats and the likely scenario of handing the leadership to

⁴²⁴ Michael White, 'Labour savages SDP on Tebbit bill', *The Guardian*, 6 February 1982, p.28

⁴²⁵ Michael White, 'Labour savages SDP on Tebbit bill', *The Guardian*, 6 February 1982, p.28

⁴²⁶ Michael White, 'Labour savages SDP on Tebbit bill', *The Guardian*, 6 February 1982, p.28

⁴²⁷ Peter Hetherington, 'Hillhead polls show Labour vote holding', *The Guardian*, 11 January 1982, p. 4

⁴²⁸ Ian Aitken, 'Hillhead offers bleak prospect to hesitant Jenkins', *The Guardian*, 5 January 1982, p.2

⁴²⁹ Aileen Ballantyne, 'Jenkins seen as most likely candidate in Hillhead election', *The Guardian*, 9 January 1982, p.26

David Owen. Jenkins was to be boosted by the defection of two Labour members to the SDP who had both been prospective candidates previously at Hillhead, David Welsh who stood in February and October 1974 and Vincent Cable who had stood in 1970 and had been a councillor on Glasgow Council.⁴³⁰

Labour's candidate was a Benn supporter, David Wiseman, who nonetheless said that he hoped 'Mr Benn and Mr Healey would come to support him,' during the campaign. Wiseman's selection came during what was termed 'fierce infighting between the pro-Benn Labour Co-ordinating Committee and Centrists allied with traditional left-wingers.'⁴³¹ Despite the turmoil in which Wiseman's selection was made, he nevertheless found himself the initial favourite, with the Labour vote holding at around 35 percent, three percent ahead of the Alliance.⁴³²

Jenkins standing as an outsider, a Welshman standing in a Scottish seat, was tipped to play against him at the outset. At the same West Bromwich speech in which he attacked the SDP's stance on Conservative anti-union legislation, Denis Healey had mocked Jenkins as "a fastidious Rob Roy" who had moved into Hillhead with no policies, a few ancient Scottish words "and a truckload of one gallon bottles of an Italian wine called Valpollicella."⁴³³

Though they were yet to know it, Glasgow Hillhead would be the highpoint of the SDP's successes prior to the General Election that was to be called a year later. Whilst acknowledging that the party had experienced difficulties at Glasgow Hillhead and noting that since 'the euphoria of last summer and autumn, and the near hysterical level of support around Crosby, the Alliance has fallen back,'⁴³⁴ Peter Etheridge of *the Guardian* surmised that Jenkins and the SDP could well benefit from 'a new burst of popularity, making Mitcham look extremely winnable and Beaconsfield, where the scope for tactical voting will be far greater than at

⁴³⁰ Peter Hetherington, 'Hillhead Labour men defect to Jenkins', *The Guardian*, 29 January 1982, p.4

⁴³¹ Peter Hetherington, 'Hillhead polls show Labour vote holding', *The Guardian*, 11 January 1982, p.4

⁴³² Peter Hetherington, 'Hillhead polls show Labour vote holding', *The Guardian*, 11 January 1982, p.4

⁴³³ Michael White, 'Labour savages SDP on Tebbit bill', *The Guardian*, 6 February 1982, p.28

⁴³⁴ David McKie, 'Alliance future mapped out in Hillhead', *The Guardian*, 27 March 1982, p.3

Hillhead, look at least like an outside chance.⁴³⁵ Yet as Crewe and King were to observe, there were to be seven subsequent by-elections in the 1979 Parliament but out of those none were to be won by an Alliance candidate.⁴³⁶ Whilst under the unified banner of the Alliance Jenkins, soon to be elected leader of the SDP, found that whilst the SDP or Liberal candidate would perform well in by-elections at Gower, Glasgow Queen's Park, Beaconsfield, Mitcham and Morden, Coatbridge and Airdrie and, as will be examined, at Peckham and Birmingham Northfield, there were to be no victories. The next success, whilst under the Alliance banner, would be won by a Liberal candidate. It had seemed that the momentum had stalled and in the face of an increasingly confident Conservative Government burnished by the victory in the Falklands and a Labour Party which had managed to hold three of the by-elections listed above and win another from the Tories meant that for the Alliance the heady days of the SDP's founding of a year earlier, or indeed the shocks caused at Warrington and Crosby, appeared a warm yet distant memory. Yet in the short-term the SDP could afford to take comfort with another notable victory and the return of Jenkins to the Commons. Prior to the Local Government elections of 6 May, the SDP were keen to play down their chances of success. With success at Hillhead and following on from the Local Government elections in May, the SDP was to see the number of MPs rise to 30 with the defection of George Cunningham from Labour, his move seeing all three MPs for Islington now representing the Social Democrats.⁴³⁷

Whatever misgivings Jenkins and others within the SDP and Alliance may have had despite the by-election victory, the inquest of the result began in bitter earnest within Labour. Peter Etheridge was to observe that Labour was in a perilous position, noting that even though it was opposing a government that had overseen a rise in unemployment and a drop in living standards, Labour's internal divisions meant that it was unable to capitalise. Furthermore, Labour's vote share had continued to fall as it had down in Warrington, Croydon and Crosby,

⁴³⁵ David McKie, 'Alliance future mapped out in Hillhead', *The Guardian*, 27 March 1982, p.3

⁴³⁶ Ivor Crewe and Anthony King, *SDP: The Birth, Life, and Death of the Social Democratic Party*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), p.164

⁴³⁷ Julia Langdon, 'SDP gains 30th MP', *The Guardian*, 17 June 1982, p.24

meaning that 'even with so much potentially running for it, the Labour Party is winning even less support now than when Mrs Thatcher turned them out of office.'⁴³⁸ To finish third in such a seat raised the alarming prospect of Labour doing badly in its heartland seats in any subsequent general election. Condemnation of the electoral performance came quickly from those on the Labour frontbenches, with the outcome of Jenkins' victory at seeing Healey, Shore and Hattersley strongly criticising the left, which in turn was bitterly rejected by some on the left at a meeting of the PLP on 1 April 1982.⁴³⁹

For Labour the defeat at Hillhead was a bitter pill to swallow and particularly so for the right. Those who were already facing pressures within their CLPs saw colleagues in the PLP joining the SDP as already noted in the Islington constituencies.

Shortly after Hillhead Labour was to be affected by the decision of Bruce Douglas-Mann to step down as a Labour MP for Merton, Mitcham and Morden in order to reclaim the seat for the SDP. The decision to do so was not one universally shared by his other former Labour colleagues who had been challenged to resign their seats by Michael Foot and others within the party, William Rodgers recalled the 'irritation' on Douglas-Mann's insistence on resigning his seat.⁴⁴⁰ The ensuing by-election backfired on Douglas-Mann as he lost to the Conservative candidate Angela Rumbold. Whatever satisfaction that Labour may have felt was at the result was compounded by them finishing in third place, the fourth time since the SDP was founded the year before.

There would be a further five by-elections from the result at Merton, Mitcham and Morton all of which would be held by Labour candidates, on three occasions the SDP candidate finished second. The Alliance may not have been achieving the victories that it had been anticipating

⁴³⁸ David McKie, 'Alliance future mapped out in Hillhead', *The Guardian*, 27 March 1982, p.3

⁴³⁹ Julia Langdon, 'Labour MPs uncertain on meaning of Hillhead', *The Guardian*, 2 April 1982, p.2

⁴⁴⁰ Bill Rodgers, *Fourth Among Equals: The Autobiography of Bill Rodgers* (London: Politico's Publishing Ltd, 2000), p.

yet the second placings unnerved Labour. One of these by-elections took place at Southwark Peckham.

The SDP campaign for Southwark Peckham made much of the perceived extreme choice that was being presented by Labour with one slogan attesting 'You've got the choice between a Bennite candidate and the Alliance.'⁴⁴¹ The Labour candidate, Harriet Harman, was from the left of the party and was a human rights advocate and member of National Council for Civil Liberties.

The SDP's candidate at Southwark Peckham was Dick Taverne, the original Democratic Labour candidate that had briefly won the seat from Labour back in 1974 after being deselected on the matter of Europe. Taverne was again facing off against his former party which had by now adopted the policy of withdrawal from the EEC. In the event the result of the by-election on 21 August 1982 was to see Taverne lose to Harman by just under four thousand votes, a drop of almost six thousand from the result in 1979.⁴⁴² The SDP's share of the vote (as part of the Alliance) went up by twenty five percent. The surge in favour for the Social Democrats was an indicator that they could make inroads into Labour seats and their tactics of emphasising a Labour candidate's left-wing credentials was to become evident at the next by-election that was due to take place in neighbouring Bermondsey and Southwark.

The Labour right also saw the pressures faced by their allies within the union movement at the TUC Conference that took place in Brighton on 8 September 1982. As Labour gathered for the Party Conference taking place at Blackpool, whilst the mood was still rancorous on the fringes there was an increasing desire for many on the soft left and the right to cooperate. The newly-elected Labour General Secretary-designate, Jim Mortimer, had made a speech only a

⁴⁴¹ 'Benn is boggy man for Taverne's attack on Labour vote', Tirbutt, Susan, The Guardian, 20th October 1982, p.3

⁴⁴² House Of Commons, Public Information Office Factsheet No 16, Statistical Digest Of By-Election Results in the 1979 – 1983 Parliament, <http://www.parliament.uk/documents/commons-information-office/m08.pdf>

month previously in which he had called on the party to unite in order to take on the Conservatives, adding that 'we are a broad party and I hope that we keep it that way.'⁴⁴³

On 27 September 1982, Labour Solidarity held a fringe event which included a keynote address by the shadow Chancellor Peter Shore. Shore, for a while considered to be of the soft left had found himself moving further to the right, his opposition to the European Economic Community being one of the few remaining policy areas that could still appeal to the anti-Markeeters on the left (although as mentioned in Chapter One, opposition to the Common Market was not simply a left versus right issue). As Edward Pearce observed by this stage 'Shore had left most of his unilateralist credentials behind, and the nationalist chauvinist strain was now the dominant one.'⁴⁴⁴

Those in attendance at the event included members of the Shadow Cabinet such as Roy Hattersley and Roy Mason. Shore used the event to deliver a speech to denounce both Militant and the SDP in turn. His attack on Militant was uncompromising:

They have deceived many who are gullible. Including a number of young people. Most of them can be reclaimed, but the old and cynical villains, the godfathers of Militant, are beyond redemption.⁴⁴⁵

Attacks such as these may have fortified Labour Solidarity members of Parliament that had been facing difficulties in their constituency parties and there signs that the right had begun to stabilise. Yet for those on the Labour right, 1982 ended with advances and reverses in equal measure. Birmingham Northfield had seen a narrow win for one of their candidates and was to be Labour's only by-election gain of the 1979-1983 Parliament. The victory at Hillhead was a particularly bitter experience for those on the Labour right now seeing the man many had

⁴⁴³ Peter Hildreth, 'United' Labour has programme to win next election, says new secretary, *The Guardian*, 22 April 1982, p.4

⁴⁴⁴ Edward Pearce, Obituary for Lord Shore of Stepney, *The Guardian*, 26 September 2001, <http://politics.guardian.co.uk/print/0,3858,4264460-108996,00.html>, [accessed 18 February 2004]

⁴⁴⁵ 'Shore leads attack on 'parasites' of Militant', *The Guardian*, 27 September 1982, p.2

once seen as a future leader actively campaigning against the party they had chosen to stay a part of. Moreover, there was to be another by-election to take place next door to the constituency of Southwark Peckham. As will be noted in more detail in the next chapter, the outcome of the by-election defeat at Bermondsey was to not only shake Labour so close to the General Election and reinvigorate the Alliance parties but raise questions over Labour's commitment to social liberalism, a cause that had been led so prominently and notably by Jenkins himself only two decades previously.

The Forward March of the SDP Halted: Darlington

The reaction after the defeat at Bermondsey was to again raise pressure on Foot's leadership of the party. Giles Radice noted in his diary that losing was 'quite an achievement in a previously safe Labour seat, mostly due to Michael Foot,' yet also observed that a story in *The Times* of 25 February in which the Shadow Cabinet were now in favour of a Healey leadership with Neil Kinnock as his deputy would ensure that Foot would remain in place.⁴⁴⁶ The touting of Healey and Kinnock as leader and deputy respectively, a so-called 'balanced ticket' must have appealed in the face of polling that not only had Labour falling considerably behind the Conservatives but falling to third place behind the Alliance: a MORI poll that appeared on the weekend of 26 February 1982 had the Conservatives on thirty-nine percent, the Alliance on thirty-four percent and Labour on twenty-six percent.⁴⁴⁷ Golding described the situation as 'intense. Having seen 11,000 votes disappear, Labour MPs made hurried calculations on the backs of envelopes. Few of them would have a job in three or four months' time, if the Bermondsey result was repeated in a general election.'⁴⁴⁸

⁴⁴⁶ Giles Radice, *Diaries 1980-2001: From Political Disaster to Election Triumph: The Political Diaries of Giles Radice* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 2004), p.83

⁴⁴⁷ UK Polling Report: 1979-1983 Polls, <http://ukpollingreport.co.uk/voting-intention-1979-1983> [accessed 20 August 2017]

⁴⁴⁸ John Golding, *Hammer of the Left: Defeating Tony Benn, Eric Heffer and Militant in the Battle for the Labour Party* (London: Politico's Publishing Ltd, 2003), p.285

However, whatever misgivings Healey may have held privately (confiding previously to Radice that 'nobody believes him in as a PM' and asking 'can you really see him negotiating with Andropov?')⁴⁴⁹, he was to maintain his support for Foot and that in any event nothing could be done until the outcome of the upcoming by-election at Darlington was known.⁴⁵⁰ Austin Mitchell was to recall that he was preparing 'to approach the leader and tell him that he had no clothes,' but subsequently 'screwed up the nerve.'⁴⁵¹ For Mitchell there was 'no magic circle like the Tory Party of old when Salisbury, Devonshire and the chief whip might have taken the leader by the arm and say "Enough is enough."⁴⁵² For Mitchell such an undertaking could only be undertaken within Labour by the trade unions but was in any event unlikely: 'David Basnett agonised, Clive Jenkins was loyal, Moss Evans waffled and Terry Duffy and the EEPTU protected Michael.'⁴⁵³ When the announcement was made that the union leaders were to meet with their shadow cabinet colleagues in the "'summit conference of the left'", it was necessary for Basnett to put out a disclaimer stating that "'our line is: we are loyal to the leader and will continue to be as long as he wants the job. I think we all ought to shut up and get on with winning the next election."⁴⁵⁴

Darlington unlike Bermondsey had not been held with a large Labour majority prior to the death of the sitting MP Edward Fletcher, the 1052 vote margin dwarfed by the one defended and ultimately overturned by the Alliance. Darlington had also experienced internal disagreements between the left and the right just as the local Labour Party had at Glasgow Hillhead and elsewhere and in that respect it was no different from such divisions that had been highly damaging to the party.

⁴⁴⁹ Radice, *Diaries 1980-2001*, p.82

⁴⁵⁰ Radice, *Diaries 1980-2001*, p.83

⁴⁵¹ Austin Mitchell, *Four Years in the Death of the Labour Party* (London: Methuen Publishing Ltd, 1983), p.100

⁴⁵² Mitchell, *Four Years in the Death of the Labour Party*, p.100

⁴⁵³ Mitchell, *Four Years in the Death of the Labour Party*, p.100

⁴⁵⁴ Paul Routledge, 'Labour 'summit' will be held in mid-April', *The Times*, 28 February 1983, p.1

In the event, the win at Darlington on Thursday 24 March 1983 was to see Ossie O'Brien returned and increasing the Labour majority. O'Brien may have been a left-wing unilateralist opposed to the Common Market yet he received support during the campaign from Foot, Healey and James Callaghan whilst Tony Benn was asked not to participate.⁴⁵⁵ What was even more satisfying for Labour was that the SDP candidate was pushed into third place. Labour voters had remained loyal to the party on this occasion. As *The Times*' Julian Haviland observed, 'When the analysis is finished, the Darlington electors are likely to be remembered for what they have not done. They allowed Labour to hold the seat, the most marginal it has had to defend in this parliament. They did not bury Mr Foot.'⁴⁵⁶ Within less than a month Labour had closed the gap on the Conservatives to four and a half points and had pushed the Alliance into third place according to a Gallup of 11 April 1983.⁴⁵⁷ For Giles Radice, an MP for a neighbouring North-Eastern constituency, there was irony in that the result had effect of relieving the pressure on the leader. Foot had been 'saved by the Darlington by-election and by northern moderates,' yet for Radice Foot's survival meant that 'the trouble with the revival of the old bibliophile is that, though it may please the party activists, it won't wash with the voters. I think that Denis is right and that Maggie may be tempted by a June election if the May local elections turn out well.'⁴⁵⁸ For the Labour right their survival now depended on hoping that Darlington was to a pointer to a better than expected defeat.

Coming third at Darlington, on a record turnout of eighty percent,⁴⁵⁹ was as Julian Haviland noted a 'humiliation' for the SDP when contrasted with the result in Bermondsey, adding that 'the SDP leaders' favourite claim – that Labour is in terminal decline and that Social Democracy it its destined successor – will be heard with less conviction.'⁴⁶⁰ As stated previously, it was another seat that the SDP had not taken from Labour with the Liberal Simon

⁴⁵⁵ Julian Haviland, 'Darlington victory lifts cloud from Labour leadership', *The Times*, 25 March 1983, p.1

⁴⁵⁶ Julian Haviland, 'Darlington victory lifts cloud from Labour leadership', *The Times*, 25 March 1983, p.1

⁴⁵⁷ UK Polling Report: 1979-1983 Polls, <http://ukpollingreport.co.uk/voting-intention-1979-1983> [accessed 20 August 2017]

⁴⁵⁸ Radice, *Diaries 1980-2001*, p.85

⁴⁵⁹ Rodgers, *Fourth Among Equals*, p.236

⁴⁶⁰ Julian Haviland, 'Darlington victory lifts cloud from Labour leadership', *The Times*, 25 March 1983, p.1

Hughes winning at Bermondsey and Roy Jenkins and Shirley Williams winning in constituencies previously held by Conservatives. The result in Darlington meant that any hopes that those SDP MPs in the North East may have harboured in holding onto their seats was now in some doubt. William Rodgers was to recollect that he 'was more sensitive to the outcome because I had been closely involved in the campaign, which would have a spin-off effect in Stockton.'⁴⁶¹ For Rodgers an SDP would have been 'a marvellous springboard for the general election', and may have resulted in the closing of the gap on Labour in the national poll 'leaving us morally in second place behind Mrs Thatcher and the Conservatives. I might even have won Stockton.'⁴⁶²

Writing thirty years after Darlington, Shirley Williams said the result was 'a huge disappointment' adding that 'the Liberal Party went into the general election of 1983 with considerable scepticism about the political skills of its junior partner,'⁴⁶³ a sentiment similarly observed by Roy Jenkins.⁴⁶⁴ It was this sense of being in the shadow of the more established party of the Alliance which was to cause the schism five years later when the discussions of merger between the Liberals and the SDP were to see David Owen refusing to participate. Owen's own views on the campaign which were to come later revealed his barely concealed contempt for his both his Liberal counterparts and also the current leader of the SDP, referring to Tony Scott as "'a flabby centrist" (code for Jenkinsite) and "a typical left-wing Liberal community politician" (and a unilateralist to boot) who should never have been selected.'⁴⁶⁵ For Owen, his opinion on the Darlington result chimed with that of Radice in that it kept Foot in place, that a defeat would have seen Healey as leader and a rise in Labour's popularity. As it

⁴⁶¹ Rodgers, *Fourth Among Equals*, p.236

⁴⁶² Rodgers, *Fourth Among Equals*, p.236; see also Campbell, *Roy Jenkins: A Well-Rounded Life*, p.617 where Campbell mentions Rodgers wrote to Jenkins expressing this sentiment in 1990.

⁴⁶³ Shirley Williams, *Climbing the Bookshelves: The Autobiography of Shirley Williams* (London: Virago Press, 2009), p.304

⁴⁶⁴ Roy Jenkins, *A Life at the Centre* (London: Macmillan, 1991), p.573

⁴⁶⁵ Campbell, *Roy Jenkins: A Well-Rounded Life*, p.617

was it stopped 'any possible SDP/Liberal Alliance bandwagon',⁴⁶⁶ a sentiment similarly shared by Jenkins.⁴⁶⁷

The polling of the Conservative candidate Michael Fallon was welcomed by his party despite his losing, a result which Owen wrote later should have been 'properly recorded as a Conservative victory'.⁴⁶⁸ As Ronald Faux of *The Times* noted it was 'a considerable achievement to come second in a seat Labour had held for twenty years in the north-east, where there was severe unemployment'.⁴⁶⁹ This would be a brief setback for the Conservatives as they were to take the seat less than three months later.

The General Election of 1983

Following on from the victory at Darlington and the loss at Bermondsey, Foot was under mounting pressure concerning whether he was able to lead the party into the expected general election. Yet at such a late stage there was no serious danger of Foot being replaced and the party went into the election if not completely united then certainly more stable although few had any doubts as to the possible outcome:

It is now clear that Labour faces a disaster of landslide proportions in which many of my friends and colleagues will be swept away – Labour may even poll fewer votes than the Alliance. The election campaign has exposed our weaknesses – the incredulity of Michael Foot, the unpopularity of our defence policy and the distrust which three years of frivolous infighting has built up for us.⁴⁷⁰

In the end Labour were to be returned with 209 seats, its worst election showing in fifty years. The Conservatives victories saw them amass a majority of 144 seats and make inroads in the

⁴⁶⁶ David Owen, *Time to Declare* (London: Michael Joseph, 1991), p.568

⁴⁶⁷ Jenkins, *A Life at the Centre*, p.573

⁴⁶⁸ Owen, *Time to Declare*, p.568

⁴⁶⁹ Ronald Faux, 'Alliance bandwagon is derailed', *The Times*, 26 March 1983, p.2

⁴⁷⁰ Radice, *Diaries 1980-2001*, p.87

North. Giles Radice noted that 'we have done badly in Wales and not particularly well in Scotland' adding that the party had been 'almost wiped out' in the South, East Anglia and the East Midlands.⁴⁷¹ The election saw Labour's vote drop even in their heartlands: Jeremy Sutcliffe recalled that 1983 was 'the only time I was worried' as the count came in for Michael Meacher's normally safe seat.⁴⁷²

The only consolation for Labour was that they had managed to avoid the ignominy of finishing third behind the Alliance and to see many of the SDP defectors lose their seats. Roy Jenkins was to be returned narrowly in Glasgow Hillhead at a rancorous count which saw his majority cut to 344 votes. David Owen was re-elected in Plymouth Devonport with a better than expected majority than had been anticipated ('a very good result for "Dr Death"', noted Radice)⁴⁷³. The defeat of Shirley Williams and William Rodgers was to be symptomatic of the defeat that the SDP was to endure.

As could be expected, when the results began to come in hurried inquests began in earnest. When asked for his opinion as to what he thought of Ken Livingstone's call for extra-parliamentary activism as a consequence of the defeat, Healey's response was characteristically forthright: 'Claptrap.'⁴⁷⁴ In response, Livingstone said that Labour had lost as a consequence of not having fought on a more radical manifesto and that the spending requirements as set out by Peter Shore would have necessitated higher public debt.

Outside the United Kingdom, Labour's performance was to cause comment in the Soviet Union. On the morning after the General Election, Soviet news agency Tass accused the Labour right for the defeat saying 'Even at the height of the election campaign a number of

⁴⁷¹ Radice, Diaries 1980-2001, p.88

⁴⁷² Interview with John Battye, Steve Garry and Jeremy Sutcliffe, 15 November 2015

⁴⁷³ Radice, Diaries 1980-2001, p.88

⁴⁷⁴ BBC Election 83, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x_xtdcQ-pfI [accessed 13 August 2017]

(Labour) right-wing figures considered it possible to come out against some important provisions of the manifesto agreed and published by the party.⁴⁷⁵

The defeat of 1983 was cataclysmic for Labour, narrowly avoiding dropping into third place and a Conservative Government returned with a transformative majority. Whilst there were some recriminations towards Foot from some quarters for the defeat, they were mainly levelled at Tony Benn who, despite having lost his seat, was keen to state that the result still showed a strong support for the socialism that he had been espousing. Yet it was a clearly shaken Benn who was leaving the Commons (albeit temporarily), only two years after almost reaching the zenith of his career in the Labour party.

As humiliating as the defeat in 1983 was for Labour, it had managed to remain the official opposition party in British politics albeit only just in terms of the national vote and the vagaries of the electoral system. Two years earlier it had been in an existential battle for survival and the Social Democrats were experiencing a meteoric rise in the polls. Yet the popularity in the opinion polls was to only translate so far in terms of electoral success and only two of the original Gang of Four were returned to Parliament at the head of a severely reduced group of SDP MPs, one that was now outnumbered by its Liberal partners in the Alliance. The SDP advance had been blunted by a combination of economic recovery, residual loyalty to the party that they had left and the Falklands War, seen by some as much a saviour to the electoral fortunes of Labour as it had been for Margaret Thatcher.⁴⁷⁶

Austin Mitchell thought that the effect of the SDP had damaged Labour severely and 'Mrs Thatcher's reign would have been shorter and less damaging had the SDP not defected, so their net achievement was negative and it seems to me they're not entitled to the praise they give themselves. They screwed up the Labour Party.'⁴⁷⁷

⁴⁷⁵ 'Labour rightwingers blamed by Tass for election defeat', *The Guardian*, 11 June 1983, p.9

⁴⁷⁶ Interview with Dianne Hayter, 24 October 2014

⁴⁷⁷ Interview with Austin Mitchell, 4 November 2014

Dianne Hayter felt that there was no need for the SDP in order for Labour 'as a necessary condition but I did think we had to get rid of the left, that was non-negotiable they were not part of the family.'⁴⁷⁸ Hayter then added that if it had been Healey then the result may have been different:

Maybe we needed a Mrs Thatcher, maybe you know we need to get thrashed at an election before realising what we had to do. It was certainly getting thrashed at an election that persuaded Neil we had to go further, so it may have been that more than the originally twelve then later other MPs leaving that did it. The electorate probably did it for us.⁴⁷⁹

Labour had been beaten badly and for Michael Foot a painful yet for him necessary undertaking as leader was coming to a close. That his party had narrowly avoided being overtaken by an alliance of former MPs who three years earlier had shared the same benches as him in the Commons was a source of great pain. Whilst his election as leader was to act as the trigger for the formation of the SDP to take place, his tenure had also seen further steps in the moves against the Militant Tendency, another issue that had caused concern not just for the Labour right but for the soft left also, small steps though they may have been for those on the right of the party. This had been significant in that it marked a leader from the left signalling that accommodation of Militant was no longer to be tolerated, a decision that was to be taken further by Foot's successor. Yet for now it was the climax to Foot's time as leadership and as devastating as the result had been for Labour it was still in existence. That achievement was as much Foot's as it was any one on the soft left or right of the party.

At the start of 1981 no one on the Labour right genuinely felt that matters were going to improve in the immediate future, if at all. Yet by the time of the General Election in 1983, the Labour right had managed to stabilise themselves and mount what was at first a rear-guard

⁴⁷⁸ Interview with Dianne Hayter, 24 October 2014

⁴⁷⁹ Interview with Dianne Hayter, 24 October 2014

action and later go on the offensive against both the far left and the SDP. The effect of the defections had been demoralising yet the election of Denis Healey had also been galvanising. When Healey had dismissively spoken to Mike Hancock that he 'had nowhere else to go', the latter was to prove him wrong. Yet for those who remained they genuinely did have nowhere else to go. Labour was *their* party, in the case of Giles Radice an ideological commitment which had become an emotional one as well. Roy Hattersley recalled that at the time of the Deputy Leadership election he was determined that he would not leave either:

I was forty-six. I had been a Cabinet minister for almost four years and I was a senior member of the Opposition front bench. My seat was safe and I should have been full of hope for the future. But I had only one clear idea about what lay ahead. If the ship sank, I would go down with it.⁴⁸⁰

This was the success of the Labour right and the ultimate failure of the Social Democrats. There still remained the similarities in support for Common Market membership, of the nuclear deterrence yet the differences continued to be whether Labour was the party to provide these and the kind of redistributionist policies that had been associated with the revisionist tradition. The SDP's attempt to first curry favour with the trade unions only to later turn against them and support the Employment Law legislation of Norman Tebbit ensured that those on the Labour right could continue to rely on the support of sympathetic trade union leaders. There would be a new generation of MPs due to commence their careers in Parliament and many of them would soon come to be identified as rising stars of the right such as Tony Blair and Gordon Brown.

For the Labour right, the defeat had resulted in a number of their MPs out of Parliament but such losses were salvaged by the defeat of Benn and some of his supporters within the PLP. It was to be the start of the right's protracted return to increasing their influence within the

⁴⁸⁰ Hattersley, *Who Goes Home?*, p.229

Parliamentary Party. Yet it would not be until another eight years and two more election defeats until an MP from the right would be elected leader. Until then the balance of power with regards to the leadership remained with the soft left.

Chapter Four

Labour and the Liberal Tradition in the 1980s

This chapter analyses Labour's social liberalism in the 1980s through case studies of the pursuit of greater rights for gay and lesbian people and the issue of video censorship. Both embodied the gradualist, reforming aspects of Labour's social policies during a decade of opposition to the economic excess and moral Puritanism were the dominant forces of the governing Conservative Party. They also demonstrate the way in which Crosland's anti-Puritanism (as expressed in *The Future of Socialism*) continued as a key theme. The purpose is to show that, in spite of pressure to buckle and tack away from nostrums that were seemingly unpopular from a political perspective, Labour in the 1980s was able to demonstrate a strong sense of social liberalism that had long existed within the wider movement. It covers a time in which the defence and improvement of the Lesbian and Gay community could be used as a political stick with which to beat Labour with increasing alacrity and venom. It is not an uncritical analysis and, as will become evident, it does highlight how Labour was prone to stumbling instead of being more assured in the steps it wished to take in pursuit of a more socially liberal country. Such missteps were taken as internal battles raged within the party or as a result of poor decision making. In spite of this, during one of its darkest periods of its history Labour was able to show that it was at times able to project a pronounced commitment to minority rights and matters of personal freedom and liberty.

Yet it also highlights how a party which in the 1950s and 60s had facilitated a relaxation of censorship laws in Britain was to participate in the great 'Video Nasties' furore and did little in the way of providing constructive criticism of the legislation when it was presented. It presents the classic dilemma faced by the Labour Party: how can it appeal to both the perceived liberal-minded middle classes and the more socially conservative working class which it was set up

to serve? Despite the upheaval that was taking place within the Labour Party it was to demonstrate that in the area of social liberalism it could still be a reforming force. Social liberalism was not the preserve of either the metropolitan Social Democrats or the hard-line 'Looney Left' but a popular cause within the party as a whole. Labour was to maintain a commitment to protection and promotion of the rights of minorities and communities at a time when not only such sentiments were not in vogue but viewed with downright hostility, particularly in the eyes of the tabloid newspapers. In spite of the divisions and the battles that the party was enduring and then in the process of repairing, Labour had common cause in the pursuit of equality and in this was continuing the tradition of social liberalism that had been prevalent since its inception.

With the advent of the Thatcher Government came a statement of intent to radically change the face of Britain, economically and socially. In spite of being someone who had voted for the decriminalisation of homosexuality and abortion, Thatcher's Government of the 1980s was to use private members bills in much the same way as the Labour Government did in the 1960s to put in place socially conservative legislation. Rejection of the permissive society and the adoption of more austere 'Victorian values' were an essential element of the New Right's politics and it was to find backing and succour amongst the right-wing print media and also the long-standing moral watchdog Mary Whitehouse. The advent of the 1980s was to see a concerted effort in unleashing market liberalism whilst simultaneously reducing the social liberalism that had been so transformative over the previous two decades. It is of course one of the ironies of modern conservatism that the economic libertarianism being espoused by the Thatcher Government – no state involvement in economic affairs and the reduction of state intervention in industry – was accompanied by interference in the affairs of its citizens either by direct legislation or the absence of it in order to benefit those who needed it the most.

As already noted in Chapter One, Labour's socially liberal credentials were burnished in the 1960s administration of Harold Wilson and were closely associated with Roy Jenkins. The

reforms which were ushered in during Jenkins' tenure such as the 1967 Sexual Offences Act were to see him be retrospectively evaluated by 'the most influential Home Secretary of the Twentieth Century.'⁴⁸¹ Jenkins had made the case for the liberalisation of many of the acts which were to come to pass in the mid-1960s a decade earlier as had Anthony Crosland in his book 'The Future of Socialism.'^{482'}⁴⁸³ Both Jenkins and Crosland's social liberalism were to have influence on a later generation of Labour politicians from across its spectrum, including the future leader of the Greater London Council, Ken Livingstone.⁴⁸⁴ Frank Dobson contended that whilst it would be churlish to take too much away from Jenkins, the groundwork had also been put in by others such as Barbara Castle and Lena Jeger and that nothing would have happened without the consent of Harold Wilson. With respect to Dobson, the claim to the ownership of the socially liberal tradition of the Labour Party can be considered to be a shared one, although Dobson's frustration was aimed mainly at what he saw as 'partly a product of the infantilism of a great deal of political commentary which has got to attribute each topic to a particular individual whereas very little in politics or life is like that.'⁴⁸⁵ The roads taken in the 1950s by Jenkins, Crosland, Jeger, Abse et al led to their destination in the 1960s. It was a natural culmination of individual endeavours and an over-arching achievement that was only possible due to the time allowed by Wilson's Government, even if this was not necessarily the sought for achievement of some of the party leadership such as George Brown⁴⁸⁶ and James Callaghan⁴⁸⁷, with even David Owen,⁴⁸⁸ Leo Abse⁴⁸⁹⁴⁹⁰ and Jenkins himself viewing being gay as an affliction, with the latter saying it was 'a very real disability for those who suffer it.'⁴⁹¹ In

⁴⁸¹ Christopher Bray, *1965 The Year Modern Britain was Born* (London: Simon and Schuster, 2014), p.277

⁴⁸² John Campbell, *Roy Jenkins: A Well-Rounded Life*, (London: Jonathan Cape, 2014), pp.182-183

⁴⁸³ Anthony Crosland, *The Future of Socialism*, (London: Constable, 2006), p.403

⁴⁸⁴ Andy Beckett, *Promised You A Miracle* (London: Penguin, 2016), p136

⁴⁸⁵ Frank Dobson, *Interview with author*, 4 November 2014

⁴⁸⁶ Dominic Sandbrook, *White Heat: A History of Britain in the 1960s* (London: Abacus, 2010), p.338

⁴⁸⁷ Martin Pugh, *Speak for Britain, A New History of the Labour Party* (London: Vintage, 2011), p.337

⁴⁸⁸ Ken Livingstone, *You Can't Say That: Memoirs*, (London: Faber and Faber, 2011), p.119

⁴⁸⁹ Campbell, *Roy Jenkins: A Well-Rounded Life*, p.298

⁴⁹⁰ See also, Jeffrey Weeks, *Sex, Politics and Society: The regulation of sexuality since 1800* (London: Longman, 1989), p.267

⁴⁹¹ Stephen Brooke, *Sexual Politics: Sexuality, Family Planning, and the British Left from the 1880s to the Present Day* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), pp.180-181

spite of this 'benevolent condescension'⁴⁹² what had happened was that matters such as homosexuality, if not completely accepted, were being brought out of the dark. For the *Daily Mirror*, the move put Britain 'in step with the liberal approach adopted by the Dutch fifty-six year ago.'⁴⁹³ To quote Brooke again, 'it was Parliament that changed the framework of sexual life in Britain,' and it was a Labour Government which facilitated it, even if in the face of suspicion from its own supporters, with the Conservative MP Sir Cyril Osborne saying that Labour would suffer for putting 'buggery in front of steel nationalisation.'⁴⁹⁴⁴⁹⁵⁴⁹⁶ Whilst Pugh further contends that Labour as a party 'was far from happy about the "permissive society"'⁴⁹⁷ 74% of its MPs had voted for the legislation.⁴⁹⁸

The Sexual Discrimination Act of 1975 was to see the establishment of the Equal Opportunities Commission to assist with the outlawing of discrimination on the grounds of gender or marital status. However, whilst decriminalisation had helped to remove the aberration that homosexuals were criminals, the age of consent for gay men was older than it was for heterosexuals. The slow pace of change to full equality had led to the formation of the Gay Liberation Front in 1970, which in 1975 tried to exert pressure on Parliament through the Campaign for Homosexual Reform to enact the equalisation of the age of consent (and to enact decriminalisation in Northern Ireland and Scotland where homosexuality was still illegal)⁴⁹⁹. This resulted in the formation of the Gay Labour Caucus in the same year, later to become the Labour Campaign for Lesbian and Gay Rights.⁵⁰⁰ If Britain was changing tentatively in some respects and faster in others, this was reflected in the Labour Party. As Hattersley attested, 'if the Wilson Government had done nothing else, its existence would have

⁴⁹² Stephen Brooke, *Sexual Politics*, p.180

⁴⁹³ Brian McConell, 'A Charter for the Outsiders', *Daily Mirror*, 5 July 1967, p.7

⁴⁹⁴ Dominic Sandbrook, *White Heat*, p.341

⁴⁹⁵ Stephen Brooke, *Sexual Politics*, p.183

⁴⁹⁶ '57 votes carry the Sex Bill,' *Daily Express*, 12 February 1966, p.5

⁴⁹⁷ Martin Pugh, *Speak for Britain*, p.336

⁴⁹⁸ Stephen Brooke, *Sexual Politics*, p.181

⁴⁹⁹ 'Gay Libs seek law reform', *The Guardian*, 3 July 1975, p.6

⁵⁰⁰ LGBT Labour – History, <http://www.lgbtlabour.org.uk/history>, [accessed 20th November 2016]

been justified by the opportunity it provided for Parliament to create a more enlightened society.'⁵⁰¹

It was this society which was now being challenged by the Conservative Government over a decade later and it was being indirectly aided by a bitterly divided Labour Party. The eventual return of the Labour Party as an effective opposition and ultimately as a viable alternative Government was to be a painful and protracted process. Whilst the loss of Social Democrats was to see Labour losing members known for their socially liberal reforming instincts, the commitment of the party to pursuing an agenda of equality was not weakened even though the SDP was now led by the man most commonly associated with the great reforms of the 1960s in Jenkins. Austin Mitchell observed that the loss of the Social Democrats did not affect the social liberal sentiment of the Labour Party at all and that the only thing that it helped to emphasise for him was the need to defeat the more militant Left and govern from the centre. Paradoxically, for a party which included a large number of self-identified social liberals, those voters who identified with the Social Democrats were not necessarily inclined to be socially liberal, Ivor Crewe and Anthony King noting that on capital punishment and censorship such supporters were sometimes closer to the Conservatives, so whilst the SDP may have wished to govern from the 'radical centre', this was not a position that some of their voters naturally assumed.⁵⁰² For their part, the Social Democrats had suggested in the first draft of their constitution that there would be 'concern for the individual regardless of *gender*, race, colour, *sexual orientation* or religion' (italics are Crewe and King's) with 'sexual orientation' removed by a vote of 147-116 for fear of tabloid newspaper reaction.⁵⁰³

The pursuit of racial and sexual equality in the 1980s, which Labour had legislated to improve in the previous two decades was continued with added zeal in 1983 under Michael Foot and

⁵⁰¹ Roy Hattersley, *Fifty Years On: A Prejudiced History of Britain Since the War* (London: Brown & Company, 1997) p.177

⁵⁰² Ivor Crewe and Anthony King, *SDP: The Birth, Life, and Death of the Social Democratic Party*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), p.296

⁵⁰³ Crewe and King, *SDP: The Birth, Life, and Death of the Social Democratic Party*, p.224

again in 1987 under Neil Kinnock, there was specific commitment to improving gender and racial equality, gay rights and a more humane approach to immigration control. In March 1982 the NEC published 'The Rights of Gay Men and Women' which raised the issue of discrimination in employment and, as Purton observed, whilst it was only a discussion paper received the immediate opprobrium of the pro-Conservative press (and was ultimately not to be adopted as official policy when put forward to the 1982 Conference).⁵⁰⁴⁵⁰⁵ This commitment was emphasised in the collection of essays from members of the shadow cabinet, *Renewal: Labour's Britain in the 1980s*, with the following from Peter Archer who saw such support as intrinsic to Labour's values: 'The socialist is descended from a long line who claimed the right to be different.'⁵⁰⁶

However, despite such fulsome declarations, the truth was that at times Labour could find itself paralysed by events. This was evident with the confusion over supporting the candidacy of Peter Tatchell in the Bermondsey by-election.

The selection of Tatchell on 7 November 1981 had been a bone of contention and the local party had chosen to select him ahead of the preferred right-wing candidate supported by the current MP Robert Mellish. Mellish had decided to retire at the end of the 1979 Parliament but the selection of Tatchell prompted Mellish to threaten to resign his seat prematurely. For John Golding, Mellish's motives were clear: despite being as 'Chief Whip, Mellish had been very tolerant of opinion and not very ideological at all', Mellish's decision stemmed from Tatchell's 'party to excluding some old-timers from standing as councillors again.' For Mellish this was not fair payment for loyalty both to him and Labour and as a consequence he set about undermining Tatchell's candidacy.⁵⁰⁷ Golding noted that Mellish 'knew that at a general

⁵⁰⁴ Peter Purton, *Sodom, Gomorrah and the New Jerusalem*, (London: Labour Campaign for Gay Rights, 2006), p.42

⁵⁰⁵ Purton, *Sodom, Gomorrah and the New Jerusalem*, p.46

⁵⁰⁶ Peter Archer, 'Socialism, Freedom and the Law', in *Renewal: Labour's Britain in the 1980s* by Gerald Kaufman (Ed), (London: Penguin 1983), p.167

⁵⁰⁷ John Golding, *Hammer of the Left: Defeating Tony Benn, Eric Heffer and Militant in the Battle for the Labour Party* (London: Politico's Publishing Ltd, 2003), p.275

election Tatchell would be swept into the House of Commons. A by-election, however, would not be so certain,' adding that 'Foot knew, too, that the Social Democrats could win well in Bermondsey.'⁵⁰⁸

Mellish provided information showing that Tatchell had provided an article for the left-wing newspaper *London Labour Briefing* in which he appeared to countenance extra-parliamentary activism, including one accusatory phrase which must have particularly rankled with Foot: 'we now seem stuck in a rut of legalism and obsessive parliamentarianism.'⁵⁰⁹ In the Commons on 3 December 1981, the former Labour junior minister, now SDP MP, James Wellbeloved, raised the article in *London Labour Briefing* prompting Foot to declare that was not an endorsed member of the party 'and as far as I'm concerned never will be.'⁵¹⁰ Tony Benn stated in his diaries that he believed Foot had mistaken Tatchell for Tariq Ali and that 'the witch hunt has begun.'⁵¹¹ Foot was compelled to agree with Eric Heffer's suggestion that the candidacy be discussed at the next NEC meeting yet stated that he only objected as 'parliamentary democracy is at stake and if I had said nothing the SDP would have made the running,'⁵¹² underlining Golding's point that there was genuine concern at the possibility of them winning the seat.

As a consequence, Tatchell's case was to be referred and NEC and on 7 December 1981 the meeting of the Organisation Committee met to discuss Tatchell's candidacy which was eventually rejected by twelve votes to seven. Golding recalled that the discussion regarding the case was 'chaotic' adding that 'the hard left were bitter and the soft left supporters of Foot were confused. Some thought Foot had made a mistake, but Kinnock to his credit argued that we were really deciding the direction of the Labour Party'⁵¹³ That Kinnock supported Foot was

⁵⁰⁸ Golding, *Hammer of the Left*, p.275

⁵⁰⁹ 'What Tatchell wrote about extra-parliamentary protest', *The Guardian* 8 December 1981, p.4

⁵¹⁰ Golding, *Hammer of the Left*, p.275

⁵¹¹ Tony Benn, *The End of an Era: Diaries 1980-90* (London: Arrow Books, 1994), p.176

⁵¹² Golding, *Hammer of the Left*, p.275

⁵¹³ Golding, *Hammer of the Left*, p.275bid

no surprise but in doing so placed him and others on the soft left of the party in a loose alliance with the right. Heffer had said that he regretted that the response that Foot had made to 'an SDP traitor' had done great harm to the party.⁵¹⁴ Foot's decision also prompted Frank Allaun to say 'I am a Foot man and I don't want to humiliate you, Michael, but you have made the most serious mistake of your life, and your only alternative now is to get Bob Mellish to stay on. I believe Tatchell's candidacy is worthy of support.'⁵¹⁵ Allaun had expressed his admiration for Tatchell over his anti-war stance during the Vietnam conflict and also his campaigning for homosexual rights. That Tatchell himself was gay was brought up as another issue for not selecting Tatchell but neither Golding nor Benn noted who this was in their accounts.'⁵¹⁶

Over a week later the NEC on 16 December and voted narrowly fifteen votes to fourteen to again disallow Tatchell's candidacy. Yet as a result of Robert Mellish supporting former Labour councillors who had been barred from standing again running as independents, this played into the hands of Benn who had continued to support Tatchell's candidacy. The issue would not settle and it would result in further meetings at the PLP and the NEC agreeing on 10 January 1983 to support the Bermondsey CLPs reselection of Tatchell. The outcome was welcomed by Benn particularly as he saw John Golding as the only person opposing the decision, 'a straw in the wind that may be the end of that sort of right wing domination.'⁵¹⁷ Foot's reasoning for backing Tatchell this time was that the latter had assured the former of his allegiance to parliamentary democracy and in a letter to Tatchell had added that 'If an election had been held at that time, I was sure that such an article could have been used to damage the party as a whole throughout the country.'⁵¹⁸ For John Golding, his concerns that Tatchell would not be able to win the seat due to being 'a known homosexual as well as a wild leftie'⁵¹⁹ was based on recent experience. Saying that he 'still bore the scars of the backlash' as a

⁵¹⁴ Benn, *The End of an Era: Diaries 1980-90*, p.178

⁵¹⁵ Benn, *The End of an Era: Diaries 1980-90*, p.178

⁵¹⁶ Golding, *Hammer of the Left*, 2003, p.277 and Benn, *The End of an Era: Diaries 1980-90*, 1994, p.179

⁵¹⁷ Benn, *The End of an Era: Diaries 1980-90*, 1994, p.263

⁵¹⁸ Philip Webster, 'Foot retreats and gives Tatchell full support', *The Guardian*, 11 January 1983, p.1

⁵¹⁹ Golding, *Hammer of the Left*, 2003, p.281

result of his support of a Government grant for the 'Gay Switchboard' in Luton during his time in the Department of Employment, he had noted hostility to the 'tolerant attitude of Ken Livingstone at the GLC.'⁵²⁰ Admitting that he had employed his 'usual brutal lack of sensitivity' he had tried to convince the NEC that 'there would be no way that the bigoted cockneys of Bermondsey would vote for Tatchell.'⁵²¹ Whilst this was may have been a swingeing generalisation, the campaign itself when it unfolded was to demonstrate how homophobic tactics were to be employed by former members of the Bermondsey Labour Party.

The horrific and unedifying campaigning that took place on the part of an independent candidate, John O'Grady, was made all the more embarrassing in that he was a former Labour Party Council Leader who had received support from the seat's previous MP, Robert Mellish. Tatchell's (and Labour's) campaign was further undermined by the references to his campaigning for gay rights and the use of SDP-Liberal Alliance literature which referenced their candidate, Simon Hughes, as 'the straight choice.'⁵²² Outright homophobia was included in election pamphlets distributed throughout the constituency, including one which asked 'Which Queen would you vote for?'⁵²³

Whilst Labour was in the midst of the darkest moments of the aftermath of the SDP split and the internal battle for supremacy between the left and right, what was striking was the confusion and reservation for the Labour leadership to step in and defend their candidate. Foot had initially denounced the candidature of Tatchell but subsequently offered lukewarm endorsement. This was mainly due to Foot's anathema to extra-parliamentary campaigning which as noted previously had been championed in an article in *London Labour Briefing* (and later reprinted in the *Guardian*).⁵²⁴ When asked about this twenty years later by Roy

⁵²⁰ Golding, *Hammer of the Left*

⁵²¹ Golding, *Hammer of the Left*, p.281

⁵²² Elliott Henderson, 'Was the "loony left" right?', *Labour Uncut*, <http://labour-uncut.co.uk/2014/02/20/was-the-loony-left-right/> [accessed 9 October 2014], para.5 of 7.

⁵²³ Laurie Taylor, 'Tatchell Man's first test', *The Times*, 22 February 1983, p.8

⁵²⁴ 'What Tatchell wrote about extra-parliamentary protest', *The Guardian*, 8 December 1981, p.4

Hattersley, Foot was to remark that: 'it had been put to me that he was the sort of person who opposes Parliament itself. And I had my duties to the party which I wanted to keep in one piece. A few days later he came to see me and it became clear that he had a real concern for the party as well as himself.'⁵²⁵ Tatchell himself was to publicly disavow any links to radical leftism such as espoused by Tariq Ali, asserting that his 'source of political inspiration is Alfred Salter and George Lansbury.'⁵²⁶

Although this may be viewed through the prism of the internal battles against Militant (of which Tatchell, whilst not a member, was viewed as from the radical left⁵²⁷), the reluctance of the party leadership for Tatchell's sexuality to be a matter of public knowledge underlined the gradualist approach that the party still had towards the matter of gay rights. Tatchell was to tell Hattersley that during the campaign he 'clearly believed that the Labour high-command expected that, when asked if he was gay, he should categorically refuse to discuss the subject.'⁵²⁸ This was perhaps in reaction to what James Curran referred to as the tabloid press' attempt to 'discredit him by whipping up atavistic prejudices against him as a deviant.'⁵²⁹ As Tatchell had yet to come out publicly as homosexual, the tabloid press resorted to what Turner notes was 'innuendo to avoid libel actions, while leaving readers in no doubt about their subtext.'⁵³⁰ As Brooke observed, Tatchell himself made a point of trying to separate his own sexuality from his support for gay rights and in doing so earned criticism from rights activists to go along with the commentary of the tabloids.⁵³¹ Brooke further highlights the cruel irony that whilst Tatchell tried to emphasise the local nature of the election his sexuality was raised by others when he tried to keep the matter private and how post-election Labour were to make a more avowed commitment to gay rights.⁵³²

⁵²⁵ Roy Hattersley, 'Outraged of Lambeth', *The Guardian*, 2 February 2000, p.7

⁵²⁶ Laurie Taylor, 'Tatchell Man's first test', *The Times*, 22 February 1983, p. 8

⁵²⁷ Alwyn W. Turner, *Rejoice! Rejoice! Britain in the 1980s*, (London: Aurum Press, 2013), p.48

⁵²⁸ Roy Hattersley, 'Outraged of Lambeth', *The Guardian*, 2 February 2000, p.7

⁵²⁹ James Curran, 'Hounds Off Peter Tatchell,' *The Times*, 20 October 1982, p.14

⁵³⁰ Alwyn W. Turner, *Rejoice! Rejoice! Britain in the 1980s*, p.48

⁵³¹ Stephen Brooke, *Sexual Politics*, p.242

⁵³² Stephen Brooke, *Sexual Politics*, p.244

Foot's performance at this by-election showed that he was, for all of his undoubted compassion, unsuited for a role that required a great deal of nuance and subtlety. Whilst he never once condemned or commented on the matter of Tatchell's sexuality, his handling of the affair allowed it to fester and in the face of a relentlessly hostile campaign (not least on the part of the Liberals), Labour and Tatchell were to lose the Bermondsey by-election on 24^h February 1983 by 10,000 votes. Tatchell did not return to fight the regain the seat at the General Election later that year.

Labour's experience at Bermondsey, with a former Labour councillor attacking the candidate's sexuality, was chastening and perhaps sadly not surprising. Attitudes in Britain were still entrenched enough to view homosexuality as still something of an aberration and within Labour this too was evident. Even the man who had championed the decriminalisation of homosexuality, Leo Abse, could write less than twenty years after his bill had been passed that as a result of an increase in one parent families, 'homosexuality and bisexuality is likely to increase as more boys are brought up with no male roles in which to identify.'⁵³³ Abse further suggested that 'the youngster could lose his way and grow up uncertain in his identity,' as a consequence of 'the triumphant liberation of women from their domestic thralldom' causing the roles of parents to become 'smudged.'⁵³⁴

Whilst Tatchell's sexuality may have been considered a reason for voters to choose an alternative candidate, this did not deter Labour from making a clear commitment to sexual equality in their manifesto: 'We are concerned that homosexuals are unfairly treated. We will take steps to ensure that they are not unfairly discriminated against.'⁵³⁵ This was the first time that such a commitment had been specifically made in relation to the gay and lesbian community, something which was absent from the manifesto of the SDP-Liberal Alliance, the

⁵³³ Leo Abse, 'The law that failed to liberate the gays', *The Times*, 28 July 1982, p.8

⁵³⁴ Abse, 'The law that failed to liberate the gays', *The Times*, 28 July 1982, p.8

⁵³⁵ Labour Party Manifesto 1983, <http://www.politicsresources.net/area/uk/man/lab83.htm>, [accessed 7 November 2014]

former party now led by the former Labour Home Secretary, Roy Jenkins. Indeed, a former Labour turned SDP MP James Wellbeloved was to describe the Labour-run Greater London Council's budgetary spending as 'lunatic antics...its desire to dish out lavish subsidies to organisations ranging from gay rights to supporters of the IRA bombers.'⁵³⁶ Such sentiments and dubious couplings were to be an indicator of how matters would be played out in the rest of the Eighties.

Neil Kinnock became Labour leader after the election defeat in 1983 and in conjunction with his new Deputy Roy Hattersley attempted to extricate Labour from the debacle of landslide which had been wrought by the Conservatives. Over the next four years, Kinnock would set about leading the efforts of re-establishing opposition the increasingly strident Thatcher administration, now unbound and buttressed by a large majority. Whilst Kinnock's energies would be used to tackle the matter of Militant and the consequences of the Miner's Strike, Kinnock's enthusiasm was at times mercilessly mocked by unsympathetic newspaper columnists, with the satirical programme 'Spitting Image' suggesting that the primary reason for commitment to apparently niche subjects was as a means of winning votes. Kinnock's attitude to gay rights has been questioned due to a comment made after the Bermondsey by-election in which he was asked if the treatment of Peter Tatchell had amounted to a witch-hunt, to which the ill-chosen reply was 'I'm not in favour of witch hunts, but I do not mistake bloody witches for fairies!'⁵³⁷⁵³⁸ Ill-judged and crass that the comment was, Kinnock was in time to disprove that he was not sympathetic to the cause of gay rights.

As had been the case of his predecessors, Kinnock was forced to struggle to provide leadership to a party in need of a unified identity, one which was to appeal to a sceptical voting public. Between 1983 and 1987, Kinnock under Labour contended with attacks both inside

⁵³⁶ 'Manchester spends a lot on rubbish', *The Times*, 24 February 1983, p.4

⁵³⁷ Colin Clews, 1981. *Politics: The Rights of Gay Men and Women*, <http://www.gayinthe80s.com/2014/03/1981-politics-the-rights-of-gay-men-and-women/> [accessed 17 November 2016] and

⁵³⁸ Stephen Brooke, *Sexual Politics*, p.244

Westminster and in the press that it was overly concerned with minority issues. On 9 December 1983, Jo Richardson, a supporter of Tony Benn, presented a Sex Equality Bill which attempted to outlaw discrimination in the workplace on the basis of sexuality.⁵³⁹ The bill was defeated 198 votes to 119, with Kinnock leading his party alongside supporters ranging across the Labour Party from new MPs such as Tony Blair and Jeremy Corbyn, to veterans like Denis Healey and Michael Foot.⁵⁴⁰ Some of the attitudes expressed showed how difficult it would have been to get it passed, with the Conservative MP Ivan Lawrence declaring:

‘Clauses 3 and 92 on homosexuality will incur the fury of many of our constituents who do not want their children to be taught by people who parade their homosexuality and think that it is a matter for exhibition and pride. How many Members want their children to be taught by a member of the Paedophile Information Exchange?’⁵⁴¹

In spite of these attacks, it did not prevent Labour MPs from defending the efforts of councils and in turn gay rights. During a debate on 5 December 1986, Tony Banks, MP for Newnham North-West asked ‘why when a local council tried to do something about discrimination against gay and lesbians was there an enormous reaction from Conservative MPs?’⁵⁴² This prompted the Shadow Local Government spokesman, Jack Straw to suggest that whilst the Conservative Party was attacking those councils who were helping to promote equality, some of its members were themselves gay and that ‘they deserve the same tolerance as Labour councillors trying to help gay and lesbian people,’ a suggestion which provoked a furious response from the Government benches.⁵⁴³ Straw’s reaction was a contrast to the reference made by Ken Livingstone when Straw chaired the Further and Higher Education Committee

⁵³⁹ Purton, *Sodom, Gomorrah and the New Jerusalem*, p.44

⁵⁴⁰ Sex Equality Bill, Hansard Commons Debate, 9 December 1983, vol 50 cc607-44, http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1983/dec/09/sex-equality-bill1#S6CV0050P0_19831209_HOC_149 [accessed 20 November 2016]

⁵⁴¹ Sex Equality Bill, Hansard Commons Debate, 9 December 1983, vol 50 cc607-44, http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1983/dec/09/sex-equality-bill1#S6CV0050P0_19831209_HOC_149 [accessed 20 November 2016]

⁵⁴² ‘MPs trade accusations over councils,’ *The Times*, 6 December 06 1986, p.4

⁵⁴³ ‘Commons row over gay slur,’ *The Times*, 6 December 1986, p.1

of the GLC and stopped the funding of a social worker course on issues faced by gay people, a course condemned by Conservative members as 'homosexuality on the rates.'⁵⁴⁴

At the 1987 General Election, Labour again gave a commitment to improving gay rights to be made in Labour's manifesto, albeit in general and somewhat diffident terms to 'take steps to ensure that homosexuals are not discriminated against.'⁵⁴⁵ In some way it was still a bold move and, as Purton noted, was as a consequence of the 1985 and 1986 Conferences which had supported the commitment to equality in the manifesto. This was in no small part due to the support given by Chris Smith, the first openly gay MP who had been elected in 1983 for the seat of Islington South and Finsbury and had come out in 1984. For Smith, gay and lesbian rights were a natural cause for Labour, declaring 'some people might regard it as marginal to our concerns as a movement. It is not. It is central to our socialism. It is central because we believe in equality – the equal right of everyone to live their life.'⁵⁴⁶ Smith's re-election in 1987 may have been a sign of a more tolerant approach by electors towards homosexuality but such sentiments were not necessarily held by the wider electorate and as *Gay Times* were to note twenty years later, 'it would be another 13 years and three general elections before another openly gay person was elected.'⁵⁴⁷

The decision to fight for gay rights may have been a cause for Labour losing votes and at one point Kinnock did ascribe it as a partial reason for the defeat in 1987. Pursuing equal rights for gay people may be seen as a contributing factor when the British Social Attitudes Survey in 1983 showed 67% of respondents identifying as Labour voters viewed homosexuality as 'always or mostly wrong.'⁵⁴⁸ Whilst this single issue can hardly account for a second landslide defeat in 1987, by 1987 this figure had risen to 74%, so it was, to view it from a coldly political

⁵⁴⁴ Livingstone, *You Can't Say That!*, p.121

⁵⁴⁵ Labour Party Manifesto 1987, '*Britain will win with Labour*', <http://www.politicsresources.net/area/uk/man/lab87.htm> [accessed 7 November 2014]

⁵⁴⁶ Quoted in Brooke, *Sexual Politics*, p.246

⁵⁴⁷ Benjamin Butterworth, 'GT Heroes – Chris Smith', *Gay Times*, 30 December 2015, <http://www.gaytimes.co.uk/life/19687/gt-heroes-chris-smith/> [accessed 1 January 2017]

⁵⁴⁸ <http://www.bsa-30.natcen.ac.uk/read-the-report/personal-relationships/homosexuality.aspx>

perspective a risk to continue supporting such a measure.⁵⁴⁹ This was also during a time when the fear surrounding the AIDS/HIV epidemic was reaching a crescendo and the association of the disease with the gay community only served to highlight the heightened suspicion that was levelled towards it.⁵⁵⁰ This was also coupled to the sense that gay men were receiving preferential treatment by local councils, including the hostility engendered in the tabloid press to the decision of Lambeth Council to designate homeless people with AIDS as a priority need for housing.⁵⁵¹

It may well be that Labour's defeats in the 1980s were not just as a result of the continuing improving economic climate and the continued stigmatisation of Labour by the media. Add to this that the embers from the battles with Militant and the Miners' Strike continued to glow and memories of the Winter of Discontent still relatively recent, it still assigned to Labour a toxicity which still hung heavy, despite Kinnock's arduous attempts to pull the party towards electability. Labour's core constituency – white, working class, socially conservative voters - had been attracted to the Tory message in the late 1970s, particularly in Essex and South East, with voters turned off by talk of more nationalisation and policies such as the right to buy finding more favour. Whilst the Conservative message was less appealing in urban areas of London and in the Northern constituencies that contained Labour's remaining strongholds, the pursuit of attainment and materialism was enormously popular. As Eric Shaw also noted, the Conservatives and their allies in Fleet Street had been successfully able to tar Labour with the 'loony left' epithet providing an 'invitation to voters to define themselves as white and respectable rather than as working class, to identify with the Conservatives as the party of whites and the upwardly mobile – and to reject Labour as the party of minorities and the failures.'⁵⁵² The particular *bête noir* for both the Conservatives and their supporters in Fleet

⁵⁴⁹ <http://www.bsa-30.natcen.ac.uk/read-the-report/personal-relationships/homosexuality.aspx>

⁵⁵⁰ Purton, *Sodom, Gomorrah and the New Jerusalem*, p.45

⁵⁵¹ Matt Cook, 'London, AIDS and the 1980s', from *Sex Time and Place: Queer Histories of London, c.1850 to the Present*, Simon Avery and Katherine M. Graham (Eds.) (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016), p.52

⁵⁵² Eric Shaw, *The Labour Party Since 1979: Crisis and Transformation*, (London: Routledge, 1994), p.195

Street was Ken Livingstone and the Greater London Council. Livingstone had pushed successfully since the mid-1970s to provide financial backing for support groups for gay people, sometimes in the teeth of fellow Labour councillor objections.⁵⁵³ Livingstone's support in particular for the Gay Teenage Group which looked into the difficulties faced by gay people under the age of twenty-one (still the legal age of male gay consent at the time). As Livingstone noted this particular policy created 'hysteria' and led to furious denunciation from Conservative MPs and an attempted investigation into his private life by newspapers such as the *Sun*.⁵⁵⁴ The critics of such policies viewed them as either at best misguided and at worst as simply cynical politics, with money spent on such causes in order to recruit a sizeable army of politically and racially - motivated mercenaries, hostile to the State that supports them.⁵⁵⁵ Livingstone had only himself to blame, according to the *Times*, having spent £5 million on areas such as the Gay Arts Sub Group Festival Babies against the Bomb, Lesbian Line Campaign against Racist Laws and the Gay London Police Monitoring Group⁵⁵⁶, which may have been noble in their intent but added to the perception that Labour councils were intent on spending local taxation on what were deemed niche areas. Polly Toynbee contended that the cause of gay and lesbian equality as put forward by Livingstone was actually counter-productive, with gay people subsidised 'on the rates particularly offensive. It gave the hounds of the moral right all the meat they needed for a successful red-blooded backlash.'⁵⁵⁷⁵⁵⁸ This strong criticism whilst publicly rejected came to be reflected in Labour Party circles, as Brooke notes that following the Greenwich by-election (which Labour were to lose to the SDP), Patricia Hewitt was to comment that the 'gays and lesbians issue is costing us dear.'⁵⁵⁹ This was perhaps borne out by voters such as Mrs Gwendoline Naden who said she had always voted Labour but was likely not to vote at all as 'all these lesbians, gays, if that's the way then fair

⁵⁵³ Livingstone, *You Can't Say That!*, p.121

⁵⁵⁴ Livingstone, *You Can't Say That!*, p.182

⁵⁵⁵ George Gale, 'Whites have rights, too', *Daily Express*, 25 April 1985, p.8

⁵⁵⁶ Ronald Butt, 'After the GLC, a Greek lesson', *The Times*, 21 July 1983, p.10

⁵⁵⁷ Polly Toynbee, 'Freedom's Roadblock', *The Guardian*, 14 January 1988 and

⁵⁵⁸ Brooke, *Sexual Politics*, p.247

⁵⁵⁹ Brooke, *Sexual Politics* p.?????

enough but we shouldn't have to pay for it.'⁵⁶⁰ It was perhaps with these sentiments in mind that even Frances Morrell, a noted Benn supporter and the leader of the Labour Independent Local Education Authority (ILEA) to call for a scaling back of the presentation of the gay and lesbian issue as 'it makes Labour unpopular, and it causes us to lose elections,' consequently 'damaging the interests of interest groups.'⁵⁶¹

Labour's eventually more avowed commitment to gay rights was exemplified by the reaction of the party to the introduction of a piece of legislation which was to become synonymous with the battles faced by gay rights movements in the 1980s. In her speech to the Conservative Party Conference on 9 October 1987, Margaret Thatcher took aim at Labour and in particular to the councils which until a year previously had been part of the GLC saying 'Children who need to be taught to respect traditional moral values are being taught that they have an inalienable right to be gay.'⁵⁶²

Here was the throwing down of a moral gauntlet – traditional values as proffered by Thatcher did not encompass the allowance of a person's sexuality to be discussed in Britain's schools. From being a supporter of the Abse Bill in the 1960s, Thatcher was about to implement the most retrograde legislation in relation to gay rights in twenty years.

The Section 28 amendment to the Local Government Act 1988 stipulated that local authorities could not 'intentionally promote homosexuality or publish material with the intention of promoting homosexuality' nor 'promote the teaching in any maintained school of the acceptability of homosexuality as a pretended family relationship.'⁵⁶³ Whilst Richard Viner was to later note that the measure was vague, this did not detract from the intent of the legislation

⁵⁶⁰ Andrew Rawnsley 'SDP raises ghost of traditional Labour voter', *The Guardian*, 6 February 1987, p.3

⁵⁶¹ Brooke, *Sexual Politics*, p.249

⁵⁶² Margaret Thatcher Speech to Conservative Party Conference, 9 October 1987, <http://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/106941> [accessed 20 November 2016]; Brooke, *Sexual Politics*, p.247.

⁵⁶³ Section 28 of the Local Government Act 1988, <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1988/9/section/28> [accessed 20 November 2016]

to specifically discriminate against gay people. If it was an obscure backwater codicil of a wider piece of legislation, why did it provoke the backlash which it did? Whilst such measures could be seen 'as part of the "loony left" council issue,' the reaction to it transcended that this was in reaction to the actions of certain Labour-controlled councils.⁵⁶⁴ It was due to the discriminatory basis of the measure, 'a symbol of the prejudice of the present parliament,'⁵⁶⁵ and whilst it was 'legal gobbledygook' its intent was 'intimidatory'.⁵⁶⁶ It did not matter that the great irony was that it did not prevent teachers from promoting positive gay and lesbian in the classroom (as sought by those such as the Conservative MP Jill Knight) but applied only to local authorities. It was that the very notion of legislation was designed to marginalise.

Labour's initial reaction to the legislation was at first to support it, despite the avowed declarations made in the manifesto of both the previous year and in 1983. In due course it was eventually to strongly oppose it, with the then Shadow Secretary of State for the Environment Jack Cunningham declaring that it raised 'fundamental issues of personal liberty and civil rights' and compared it to the discrimination faced by homosexuals with that faced by Jews and immigrants.⁵⁶⁷ The stumbling into opposition to this measure did not endear it to those who were being affected by the attitudes inherent in the legislation.

That Labour continued to be equivocal on the issue of gay rights does undermine how it could be seen to adhering to social liberalism during the mid-1980s yet the party was in an invidious position. Whilst those such as Cunningham mentioned above criticised the introduction of Section 28, the party must have been aware that to take too strong a stand was to potentially alienate an electorate that had again rejected them comprehensively at the last general election. Polling had shown a degree of public antipathy to gay rights as mentioned previously

⁵⁶⁴ David Willets, 'The Family' in Dennis Kavanagh and Anthony Seldon (Editors), *The Thatcher Effect* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989)

⁵⁶⁵ Geoffrey Robertson, 'Fear not Clause 28, only the prejudice behind it', *The Guardian*, 1 June 1988, p.19

⁵⁶⁶ Sarah Roelofs, 'Section 28 What's in a Law', *Spare Rib*, Issue No, 192, (June 1988), p.42, <https://www.bl.uk/spare-rib>, [accessed 18 August 2016]

⁵⁶⁷ Simon Mackley, 'The Long Road to Repeal: the Labour Party and Section 28', *New Histories*, July 5 2012, <http://newhistories.group.shef.ac.uk/wordpress/wordpress/the-long-road-to-repeal-the-labour-party-and-section-28/>, [accessed 26 October 2014]

and this may explain the balancing act that the Labour leadership was trying to achieve. As Brooke noted it was 'hard to see any other space for the espousal of gay rights at this time, particularly given the Kinnock leadership's desire to move Labour to the centre.'⁵⁶⁸ Nevertheless, Kinnock referred to the new legislation as a 'vicious...pink star clause',⁵⁶⁹ and consequently at the Conference in 1988 and backed by the leaders of the T&GWU and GMB unions, voted for the eventual repeal of Section 28.⁵⁷⁰

Yet for all of this, reckless as it may seem from a purely political sense and pressed as it had been from the grassroots, Labour under Kinnock was to include the commitment to repealing Section 28 in the 1992 Manifesto. Labour was also committed, again in the face of initial reluctance, to setting a free vote on the issue of the equalisation of the age of consent.⁵⁷¹ It was not as full-throated a statement as that which appeared in the Liberal Democrat's manifesto⁵⁷² but it did provide a continued thread to Labour's commitment equal rights at that did not exist in any other party agenda in the previous two elections.

Prior to the first Thatcher Government of 1979-83 there were those within Government and certainly on the Conservative backbenches who desired nothing more than the reasserting of what they saw as morality in the heart of society which had been undermined as a consequence of the reforms which ushered in the 'Permissive Society.' Now that the Conservatives had been returned with an even bigger mandate than the one gained four years previously, such voices were to become increasingly strident. As well as the area of an individual's personal life, there were those within the Conservatives who sought to regulate what was available for people to watch on their television screens, particularly with regards to the rapidly increasing home video market that was emerging in the 1980s. In the early 1960s,

⁵⁶⁸ Brooke, *Sexual Politics*, p.251

⁵⁶⁹ Brooke, *Sexual Politics*, p.251

⁵⁷⁰ Purton, *Sodom, Gomorrah and the New Jerusalem*, p.51

⁵⁷¹ Labour Party Manifesto 1992, <http://www.politicsresources.net/area/uk/man/lab92.htm> [accessed 13 October 2016]

⁵⁷² Liberal Democrat Manifesto 1992, <http://www.politicsresources.net/area/uk/man/libdem92.htm> [accessed 13 October 2016]

the President of the British Board of Film Censors was the former Labour Home Secretary Herbert Morrison who was keen to state both his working-class origins and his disapproval of 'homosexuality, of loose living among teenage youth, and of whores and tarts, and his disapproval vented on films which featured these things.'⁵⁷³ Morrison's opinions would have found support with many on the Conservative benches which were now pressing their Government for action in what people were able to watch in their homes.

The unalloyed zeal of the more censorious Conservative MPs was often given tacit approval and this was particularly underscored with the Video Recordings Act of 1984. Introduced by the Conservative MP Graham Bright as a means of introducing regulation to the home video market (ironic in the light of the rapid deregulation that was taking place elsewhere), the act was as a result of a campaign strongly supported by the *Daily Mail* and by Mary Whitehouse's National Viewers and Listeners Association (NVLA). The primary purpose of the proposed act was in order to ban or censor films considered of an offensive nature, the period of so-called 'video nasties'.

Such acts can be seen as a reflective of the time in which they are introduced so when viewed as such the Video Recordings Act is an example of both an increasingly censorious age and of the use of effective media campaigning to direct Government policy. The sense of outrage as demonstrated by the tabloid media made this a *cause celebre* was intensely felt by MPs who were directly lobbied to support the legislation by constituents, the NVLA and pressure from newspapers and even television current affairs items (items on the BBC Newsnight and Nationwide programme could be seen to be less than impartial in the way the issue was to reported).⁵⁷⁴ The Daily Express viewed it clearly as society walking 'the tightrope between good and evil,' and that the country should 'shake ourselves free of the cretinous "progressive"

⁵⁷³ Alexander Walker, quoted in Tom Dewe Mathews, *Censored* (London: Chato and Windus, 1994), p.159

⁵⁷⁴ See the documentary, 'Video Nasties: Moral Panic, Censorship and Videotape', by Jake West in the collection, 'Video Nasties: The Definitive Guide', Nucleus Films, 2010

dogma that if we burn video nasties today we shall be burning books tomorrow.⁵⁷⁵ As far as certain tabloid newspapers were concerned, it was very much a moral crusade.

In the face of legislation which set about deciding what people were able to watch in the privacy of the own homes, there was the need for a response which challenged such an act being introduced. The push against calls for Government intervention into areas of entertainment was again taken up by pressure groups outside of Parliament such as the National Council for Civil Liberties, which appeared to be at times a lonely and futile attempt to counter the march of the censorious which had utilised political process to further their own agenda. Unlike the movements of the 1970s which had gained footholds in the corridors of local power if not nationally, there was no defiant clarion call to support those who were ploughing a lone furrow in opposing the Act. This was the period in which Polly Toynbee was to write, 'Common sense and the national opinion polls tell us that most people believe that repeated exposure to violence on television and in films is a bad thing. A generation brought up on a diet of violence is likely to produce more violent people.'⁵⁷⁶ The article in which this was taken from was emblematic of much of the discourse which was taking place and adopted by those who saw themselves as Social Democrats just as it had been by those who identified as traditionalist Conservatives. Whilst the thrust of Toynbee's argument is against the objectification and the depiction of violence against women and warns against accepting generalised findings against the effects of visual violence, it nonetheless is framed as justifying the introduction of a wider censorship.

Would the Labour Party of the 1960s and 1970s have approved of such a measure so readily or indeed in some cases, so approvingly? This is perhaps an unfair question to pose as that for many MPs to be seen to be opposing the censorship or out-right banning of films deemed to be offensive would be politically suicidal. In the 1970s, Labour figures featured strongly in

⁵⁷⁵ Express Opinion, *Daily Express*, 10 November 1983, p.8

⁵⁷⁶ Polly Toynbee, 'Why nasty is as nasty does', *The Guardian*, 13 March 1984, p.11

cases where censorship was being pushed by conservative groups. Ken Livingstone, for instance, was vice-chair of the Film Viewing Board of the GLC which acted as a body to hear appeals by makers of films banned by the BBFC. Livingstone said that both he and the chair, Enid Wistrich, both 'opposed censorship on principle,' and set out trying to 'justify ending film censorship for adults.'⁵⁷⁷ Yet Livingstone's views on censorship were to be 'changed by feminism and by some disturbing films that celebrated sexual violence against women'⁵⁷⁸, and as a result his attitudes hardened and accepting of censorship in films which featured such content.

In Parliament no such opposition appeared to exist. What can be verified is that no Labour, nor very few MPs or peers of all parties were to directly oppose the introduction of tighter home video regulation and censorship and as Alwyn Turner notes it was left to a Conservative, Matthew Parris, to suggest that the Act was at best misplaced.^{579 580} Turner adds that 'there had been a time when left-wing intellectuals would have opposed such moves, at least on the grounds that 'censorship of art by the state is always to be regretted', yet by the mid-1980s 'such figures were thin on the ground.'⁵⁸¹ There was no challenging of attitudes which were patronising to the working class viewers which some of the concerns were directed towards, as highlighted by Julian Petley in reference to the Conservative MP Harry Greenaway claiming that videos 'are often a higher priority in the homes of people who are not particularly articulate, and who do not read books or listen to music very much.'⁵⁸² It was an argument at turns anti-intellectual and snobbish. Moreover whilst the legislation which was to come to pass was sponsored by a Conservative, a previous attempt to bring about a similar bill came via the urging of a Labour MP, Gareth Wardell, who whilst supporting the introduction of the Bright

⁵⁷⁷ Livingstone, *You Can't Say That!*, p.105

⁵⁷⁸ . Livingstone, *You Can't Say That!*, p.107

⁵⁷⁹ Turner, *Rejoice! Rejoice! Britain in the 1980s*, p.209, and

⁵⁸⁰ Martin Barker, 'Nasty Politics or video nasties?', in Martin Barker, (Editor), *The Video Nasties – Freedom and Censorship in the Media*, (London: Pluto Press, 1984), p.37

⁵⁸¹ Turner, *'Rejoice! Rejoice! Britain in the 1980s'*, p.210

⁵⁸² Julian Petley, *Us and Them*, in Martin Barker and Julian Petley (Editors), *Ill Effects – the Media/Violence* (London: Routledge, 2004), p.179

legislation had previously castigated the Thatcher Government for inaction.⁵⁸³ It was then, as indeed it is still, believed that there was a possibility of a violent act seen on screen would be replicated. Denis Howell, the former Labour Sports Minister said in the Commons that ‘when instances of it are shown on television there is an immediate increase in the amount of football hooliganism. Obviously, there is a direct relationship between the showing of such news items and the incidence of football hooliganism.’⁵⁸⁴ These certainties were never challenged, the assumptions made on questionable research were not scrutinised by a member of the Labour benches nor was there any highlighting how censorship in this area could potentially impact on their movement. This latter point was made by Geoffrey Robertson who asked

‘But (to take an entirely hypothetical example) will they be happy to open their Guardians in a year or so to read an angry article by Polly Toynbee about the collapse of a GLC-funded feminist video-collective, whose award-winning educational films about rape (“human sexual activity”), wife battering (“acts of gross violence”), and child birth (“depiction of human genital organs”) have been declared “unsuitable for showing in the home by the BBFC.”’⁵⁸⁵

Robertson’s analysis may be somewhat pungently on the nose yet the wider-point about the potentially invasive nature of cultural censorship was one which was not being highlighted by anyone on the Labour benches. This was a long-way from the reforming movements of the 1960s, the pushing of envelopes and the broadening of minds, which for better or for worse had been facilitated by a Labour Government permitting such things to come to pass. What is particularly ironic is that the man who in 1955 had objected to the banning of ‘horror comics’ as ‘a thoroughly bad Bill,’⁵⁸⁶ remained silent throughout the Bright Bill almost thirty years later. Roy Jenkins, as with many within Parliament, did not vote against this measure. Many

⁵⁸³ Video Recordings Bill Debate, Hansard, HC Deb 11 November 1983 vol 48 cc521-80, <http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1983/nov/11/video-recordings-bill> [accessed 30 August 2015]

⁵⁸⁴ Video Recordings Bill, Exempted Works, HC Deb 16 March 1984 vol 56 cc629-48 <http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1984/mar/16/exempted-works> [accessed 30 August 2015]

⁵⁸⁵ Geoffrey Robertson, ‘Chain-saw Censor’, *The Guardian*, 14 March 1984, p.23

⁵⁸⁶ Campbell, *Roy Jenkins: A Well-Rounded Life*, p.183

supported it. Neil Kinnock expressed support for the Bill and if there were to any MPs who had doubts as to the nature of the legislation were warned by those in the tabloids that they would 'be a very unpopular minority.'⁵⁸⁷

Bright's attempt to encourage similar legislation to be passed by the European Parliament in late November 1983 was not to be successful, despite his efforts in showing edited highlights of certain horror films that he presented to MPs seeming having the same effect on MEPs.⁵⁸⁸ Similarly, attempts to add sexually explicit films at the committee stage of the Bill were defeated when Labour, SDP and six Conservative MPs defeated the measure by 11 votes to 6.⁵⁸⁹ Nevertheless, the Bill was passed unopposed by Parliament and became law in 1984. Not that this was considered to be the end of the matter. On 5 December 1985, the backbencher Ivor Stanbrook asked Thatcher to agree with Norman Tebbit 'that many social evils of our time derive from the permissive society promoted by liberal politicians in the 1960s and 1970s' and asking the Government to 'abandon their posture of neutrality on some issues' which was endangering the 'Christian way of life'. In reply Thatcher remarked that 'the Government have supported private Members' Bills on issues such as controlling video nasties and indecent displays. I hope that we shall continue to take that attitude.'⁵⁹⁰ The 'video nasties' furore continued to be a useful prop for the Conservative Government and those in the media to ascribe as the cause of various societal ills⁵⁹¹ and it did so with the assistance of the opposition benches. In Labour's and Kinnock's defence, the period in which this took place was otherwise dominated by two of the defining periods of the mid-1980s, namely the Miners' Strike of 1984 and the continuing action against Militant.

⁵⁸⁷ Norman Luck, 'Maggie pledges war on nasties', *Daily Express*, 11 November 1983, p.2

⁵⁸⁸ John Burns, 'Video horror show shocks Europe,' *Daily Express*, 17 November 1983, p.3

⁵⁸⁹ 'Maggie loses porn curb bid', *Daily Express*, 2 February 1984, p.7

⁵⁹⁰ Margaret Thatcher Prime Minister Questions, 5 December 1985, <http://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/106191>, [accessed 20th November 2016]

⁵⁹¹ Barker, 'Nasty Politics or video nasties?', in Martin Barker, (Editor), *The Video Nasties – Freedom and Censorship in the Media*, p.29

Conclusion

A government can sometimes be the directing force for societal and attitudinal change but invariably it is the agent of management and in a country such as Britain, such management has been a feature of Governments regardless of their political leanings. If Burke said that Governments needed to ensure that it maintained some change in order to ensure the status quo, from a Conservative perspective⁵⁹², then perhaps a more fitting aphorism for progressives would be that of Alfred North Whitehead: 'the art of progress is to preserve order amid change and preserve change amid order.'⁵⁹³ In the 1960s it was good fortune for there to be a Labour Government in power during a period of considerable social transformation. In the 1980s the Thatcher Government not only put a brake to progress but set about reversing it. During the 1980s, despite a period of intense division, in spite of the ordure flung at it and its leadership by a vehemently hostile print media Labour for the most part maintained a commitment to social liberalism when it would have been so easy to abandon it. In terms of how important this was viewed or how popular this was with its core constituents, for many the causes were not high on the list of priorities. The manner in which Labour reached its eventual position on gay equality may have caused despair in those who wanted a more full-throated approach yet in a country as naturally conservative as Britain it was perhaps the correct strategy to adopt.

In the face of crushing defeat and existential crisis, Labour's social liberalism was to survive the many problems that the party faced throughout the 1980s. The defection of the liberal-minded Social Democrats in 1981 did not diminish the social liberal instinct within Labour and indeed it was to continue the fight of equality in an ever louder voice when it would have been easier to downplay it. During the 1980s Labour's socially liberal commitment was maintained

⁵⁹² 'A state without the means of some change is without the means of its conservation': Burke, Edmund Select Works of Edmund Burke: Reflections on the Revolution in France: Volume 2 Paperback. Indianapolis, US: Liberty Fund Inc., 2010. ProQuest ebrary. Web. 1 August 2016, p.108

⁵⁹³ Alfred North Whitehead, *Process and Reality* (New York: The Free Press, 1985), p.339

and had the satisfaction of eventually seeing their policies implemented after years of painful infighting and a protracted period of humiliating opposition. It may depend on how someone may view the great societal upheaval since the 1960s but in defending causes in support of equality at a time when such issues were being marginalised, Labour lived up to the declaration made by Harold Wilson during the ushering in of a more tolerant society of which he himself was uncertain: 'The Labour Party is a moral crusade or it is nothing.'⁵⁹⁴

The period in which the debate on both the Video Recordings Act and Section 28 was to take place during a period of ideological readjustment within the Labour Party, one which was to be led by Neil Kinnock and buttressed by the social democratic forces within the party as epitomised by the deputy leader Roy Hattersley. The following chapter examines how that readjustment was to take place and how a party which had suffered electoral ignominy slowly began the process of adapting to a more social democratic set of aims and values, in the process isolating both the hard left within Labour and the Social Democrats.

⁵⁹⁴ Stuart Thornton, *Dictionary of Labour Quotations* (London: Biteback Publishing, 2013), p.375

Chapter Five

Labour After 1983

We have to learn the language afresh of the people who we wish to represent and who still need us. It is the language that has been changed by environment, by television, by acquisitive values. It won't be done the Scargill way, or the Meacher/Benn way either.

Philip Whitehead⁵⁹⁵

This chapter critically assesses and reflects on the slow rebuilding process which was to take place after the disaster of the 1983 General Election. It also looks at how Labour was to find continued difficulties in dealing with the establishment of the Social Democrats as one of the main political parties which was to accelerate Labour's move from its left-wing policies to a more centrist position. This was undertaken within a political landscape now completely dominated by the Conservatives under Margaret Thatcher, emboldened and invigorated by a crushing majority which was to be maintained and sustained throughout the Eighties and beyond.

Labour's progression to the centre was undertaken by two of the emerging figures of the soft left and the Revisionist right. Figures such as Giles Radice represented the Revisionist right that advocated less state intervention, were actively pro-European and favoured multilateralism. On the soft left Robin Cook was to become a close Kinnock ally and like the

⁵⁹⁵ Cambridge, Churchill College, Kinnock Papers, Churchill Archives, KNNK 2/1/12, Letter from Phillip Whitehead to Neil Kinnock, 16 June 1983

leader disposed to a more unilateralist stance when it came to nuclear defence. Yet Cook, as with Kinnock himself, was to make the transition to a more pragmatic stance on this and other policy issues such as on Europe and nationalisation, moves which were to enable them to reach a quicker understanding.

Neil Kinnock's election as leader and Roy Hattersley as deputy was to be reported as 'the dream ticket', taking into account their popularity within the party and the hope that such a pairing would ensure that no repeat of the bitterness of four years earlier was to be repeated. Kinnock's and Hattersley's efforts to try and rebuild Labour firstly as a credible opposition and then an alternative Government in waiting took place against a backdrop of the last great period of industrial unrest in the form of the Miners' Strike of 1984 and the expulsion of members of the Militant Tendency.

The chapter will examine how Kinnock was to achieve what was to be a social democratic settlement within the party as a consequence of the defeat in 1983 and again in 1987. This was to see Kinnock reach a rapprochement with the right of the party and bring the Labour Movement with them. It examines how the move to the political centre was to be accelerated with the third consecutive general election defeat in 1987, another heavy defeat which was to prompt a wide-ranging review of Labour's policies. The Policy Review, involving all aspects of the Labour Movement and utilising the use of focus groups was to see the gradual abandonment of unilateralism and the adoption of a more pro-European stance, the two shibboleths that had caused the schism six years previously. Within less than a decade of the breakaway having taken place, the Social Democrats were to see the majority of their new party merge with the Liberals, with one its original founders refusing to do so.

The Aftermath of the General Election of 1983

As has been examined in Chapter Three, there had been expectation that Labour would suffer badly at the 1983 General Election. A triumphant Margaret Thatcher had seen her leadership

credentials burnished by victory in the Falklands War a year earlier. After three years of economic contraction and record levels of unemployment, growth had returned, inflation had fallen to 3.7 percent from nearly 22 percent in May 1980, and interest rates were due to fall below ten percent compared to the seventeen percent reached in the early months of the Thatcher Government. With a recovering economy and a military victory behind her, Margaret Thatcher was able to announce an election with a sense of confidence strengthened by a strong showing in the polls and a split opposition. The fear for Labour had been that not only was there the prospect of a heavy defeat but one made all the more devastating in the event of a strong showing by the Alliance. The prospect of finishing third in the popular vote had been a very real possibility and had only been narrowly avoided.

The outcome of the Conservative's victory was overwhelming; as Kenneth Morgan noted, the defeat transcended that of the calamity of 1931 and that fifty years earlier Labour's share of the poll had been just under 31 percent.⁵⁹⁶

For the far left, the defeat of Tony Benn at Bristol South East removed from Parliament their most powerful advocate of their cause. Although Benn was to return to the Commons within a year, this defeat was to stymie the left's advance. Whilst there was to be an influx of MPs who were to join the Campaign group in due course, including one of the founders of *London Labour Briefing* Jeremy Corbyn, in losing Benn it had lost its most effective and charismatic representative.

For the right, the defeat may have removed Foot from the leadership and Benn from Parliament and the new intake of MPs in 1983 saw those who were to quickly make a name for themselves on the Labour right such as Tony Blair and Gordon Brown. Yet there was no sense of triumphalism. Giles Radice noted in his diary a week after the election that at a

⁵⁹⁶ Kenneth O. Morgan, *Michael Foot: A Life* (London: Harper Perennial, 2007), p.434

meeting with George Robertson and Donald Dewar they discussed the likely election of Neil Kinnock as Labour leader:

We also reflect that our point of view is in considerable retreat. The right in the PLP is weaker than it has ever been, while the breakaway faction (the SDP) has lost to the Liberals in the Alliance. Donald and I both say that with all seriousness that this may be our last parliament.⁵⁹⁷

The analysis of Radice's, that the Labour right's grouping in the PLP had been weakened, may seem to be an exaggeration in hindsight, certainly considering that the centre-right still dominated the party. Yet from the outset there was only one real prospect for the Labour leadership and that person was to come from the soft left as had his predecessor.

Kinnock and Hattersley

The election of Neil Kinnock and Roy Hattersley as the so-called 'dream ticket' was to prove a popular decision yet such a team, balanced between soft left and right was not a unique phenomenon in the Labour Party nor was it a guarantor of success. Variations had been in place in the post-war period, with limited success with regards to helping provide party unity (this is if Wilson was still to be considered as from the soft left and acting as the counterpoint to George Brown place on the Labour right).

Kinnock's support from the Bennite Campaign group something he could not count upon. One area that had distinguished the hard and soft Left factions within Labour was the sense of betrayal and anger towards the previous Labour administration. Such a sentiment had been in evidence in the aftermath of the defeat of the 1970 Wilson Government but was renewed with an increased ferocity in 1979, particularly by Benn and his supporters. This stood them

⁵⁹⁷ Giles Radice, *Diaries 1980-2001: From Political Disaster to Election Triumph: The Political Diaries of Giles Radice* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 2004), pg.89

apart from Michael Foot and his supporters such as Kinnock who, whilst critical towards the Government throughout much of the 1974-79 administration, was also careful not to criticise the leadership when Labour was returned to opposition following the Thatcher victory. As Martin Westlake observed, 'whilst much of the left was reacting against Callaghan and Healey, he (Kinnock) was reacting against Thatcher and Joseph.'⁵⁹⁸ According to Westlake, Kinnock's move away from the Hard Left began in the spring of 1979 shortly after the election defeat⁵⁹⁹ and by 1980 had left the CLPD of which he had been a founder member.⁶⁰⁰ For Kinnock, the sense of betrayal that was felt by some was instead replaced by a scepticism as he came to terms with accepting the rationale that the reason the Wilson and Callaghan Governments had failed was as a result of circumstances.⁶⁰¹ Unlike the apparent ideological purity that was being pursued by Benn, Kinnock saw his view as being a more pragmatic approach to socialism:

I, and some people like me, maintained the Left argument, because of our view the Labour Party would be corroded, if not endangered, if that Bevanite, Tribunite convention wasn't maintained. I'm not saying that as somebody holier than thou. Some people describe it as being guardians of the soul of the party, I think that's stating it much too highly, and romantically. My view derived not from a soulful attitude but from a pragmatic view of the general shape of British politics and of the Labour Party.⁶⁰²

The Left's united front was already beginning to fragment just as it began to press home its advantage. Even before the election of Foot, the Tribune group was experiencing internal tensions which were to come to a head shortly after the formation of the SDP. Kinnock later

⁵⁹⁸ Martin Westlake, *Kinnock* (London: Ian St John, Little, Brown, 2001), p.139

⁵⁹⁹ Westlake, *Kinnock*, p.165

⁶⁰⁰ Westlake, *Kinnock*, p.190 – note, Westlake states that the CLPD was founded in 1979 whereas CLPD themselves state it was founded in 1973 by Frank Allaun. See also John Carr's 'Marxism Today and Labour', Progress, 31 October 2011, <http://www.progressonline.org.uk/2011/10/31/marxism-today-and-labour/> [accessed 28.04.2016]. More recently, Jeremy Corbyn noted in an interview on party democracy that the CLPD was founded in 1970: <http://www.theguardian.com/politics/2016/apr/29/jeremy-corbyn-sets-up-inquiry-into-labour-antisemitism-claims>, [accessed 29.04.2016]

⁶⁰¹ Westlake, *Kinnock*, p.168

⁶⁰² Interview with Neil Kinnock, 18 January 2012

observed that he regretted some of the positions, or 'conventions' as he termed them that the Tribune Left had taken, saying that the 'anti-Europeanism was a mistake and that became apparent to me within two years of the Referendum.'⁶⁰³ His reservations therefore began to form at some point in 1977, and this was something which he ruefully looked back on as something he should have reconsidered earlier. Such reservations have been noted in the previous chapter with Kinnock's support for Foot over Benn on issues such as the Bermondsey election and his readiness to work in tandem with those from the centre and right of the party.

Kinnock's decision to stand was unsurprising and from the outset he was the favourite to win the leadership. Martin Westlake observed that Kinnock had enhanced his profile within the Parliamentary Labour Party due to his defiance of Tony Benn following the aftermath of Bermondsey by-election when the latter attempted to obtain assurances from shadow cabinet members that they would denounce speculation on Michael Foot's leadership.⁶⁰⁴ That such speculation clearly existed was not the point but Kinnock was cynical of Benn's ostensibly helpful intervention to assist Foot and questioned Benn's motives, observing that 'loyalty to Michael and to the welfare of the party should, in any case, have been a long and resilient practice, not a belated beating of chests.'⁶⁰⁵

Friends and colleagues of Kinnock's wrote letters of support and in expectation of his victory, many of which touched upon the matter of Labour's divisions, of a need to move away from the far left and a need for a return to a more inclusive and broad church approach. In a letter dated 11 June 1983, Roger Robinson wrote to Kinnock attacking the far left 'who, like the Bourbons, learnt nothing, may continue to foist on the party their concept of a grey, humourless world, revolutionary in form and frightening to the ordinary person.'⁶⁰⁶ Those with such ideals, wrote Robinson, would not do anything to enable democratic socialists to provide

⁶⁰³ Interview with Neil Kinnock, 18 January 2012

⁶⁰⁴ Westlake, *Kinnock*, 2001, pp. 200-201

⁶⁰⁵ Westlake, *Kinnock*, 2001, pp. 200-201

⁶⁰⁶ Cambridge, Churchill College, Kinnock Papers, Churchill Archives, KNNK 2/1/12, Letter from Roger Robinson to Neil Kinnock, 11 June 1983

assistance to those who needed it and attacked the idea of extra-parliamentary activity as proffered by those such as Ken Livingstone (albeit not using the same rhetoric as expressed by Robinson):

We have to examine our viewpoints on many issues and be an effective opposition in Parliament and without. Extra parliamentary action must never lead to bloodshed on the streets, nor violence, nor the anarchy some have already stated publicly they wish to see.⁶⁰⁷

Robinson added that Labour had to 'bring back humour and tolerance to our party – develop a broad base and end our policy to travel along entrenched, narrow and blinkered doctrine.'⁶⁰⁸

Further advice on taking a moderate position was provided by Denis MacShane, later to be MP for Rotherham and Europe Minister under Tony Blair in the early 2000s. MacShane wrote to Kinnock on 17 June 1983, providing him with a memo on foreign affairs questions and advising Kinnock that he might find it useful as he 'tried to steer a way between the mindless NATOism-cum-Europhilia of one element of the Movement and the utopian, mindless leftism of another element.'⁶⁰⁹

The recently defeated MP for Derby North, Phillip Whitehead, wrote to Kinnock to observe that if he were to be elected leader:

we face a daunting task. The Labour Party seems to have plunged itself immediately into a further consideration of the ever-interesting topic of itself, its rules and procedures, without an inquest into our defeat. Speaking for my bit of Middle England which we have held against the trend three times over until last week's debacle, I think

⁶⁰⁷ Cambridge, Churchill College, Kinnock Papers, Churchill Archives, KNNK 2/1/12, Letter from Roger Robinson to Neil Kinnock, 11 June 1983

⁶⁰⁸ Cambridge, Churchill College, Kinnock Papers, Churchill Archives, KNNK 2/1/12, Letter from Roger Robinson to Neil Kinnock, 11 June 1983

⁶⁰⁹ Cambridge, Churchill College, Kinnock Papers, Churchill Archives, KNNK 2/1/12, Letter from Denis MacShane to Neil Kinnock, 17 June 1983

we have got to take stock of the terrifying gap between the activists and those for whom they claim to speak. We thought that the rhetorical excesses of Bennery would be forgotten once the suspended its own slanging for a while. They were not.⁶¹⁰

Whitehead went on advise that Labour had to ensure that it reconnected with its core working class supporters:

As you know my own family by occupation as well as origin is working class – lorry drivers, railwaymen and so on. None of them voted Labour this time, except in the Derby North constituency where personal loyalty kept them in line. There were 4 million like them.⁶¹¹

Kinnock's continued support for policies championed by his mentor and predecessor Michael Foot such as opposition to the European Economic Community and a commitment to unilateralism continued to chime with CLPs throughout the country, although he was still asked to confirm that this was the case. In response to a questionnaire sent to Kinnock by the Hampstead and Highgate Labour Party, he confirmed support for EEC withdrawal and unilateralism though deferred to 'party policy' on matters such as a united Ireland and the expulsion of Militant. Kinnock also confirmed support for the continuation of the mandatory reselection of MPs but not to them being mandated by their CLPs, the continuation of the Greater London Council and the right for a women to choose in relation to abortion rights and the implementation of positive discrimination for women within the party.⁶¹² Yet in an article for Tribune, Kinnock tempered his support for Common Market withdrawal by declaring 'there are other areas of policy, such as our relationship with the EEC, the chosen form of public ownership, the improvement of the Welfare State and the strengthening of our democracy that

⁶¹⁰ Cambridge, Churchill College, Kinnock Papers, Churchill Archives, KNNK 2/1/12, Letter from Phillip Whitehead to Neil Kinnock, 16 June 1983

⁶¹¹ Cambridge, Churchill College, Kinnock Papers, Churchill Archives, KNNK 2/1/12, Letter from Phillip Whitehead to Neil Kinnock, 16 June 1983

⁶¹² Cambridge, Churchill College, Kinnock Papers, Churchill Archives, KNNK 2/1/12, Letter and questionnaire from Hampstead and Highgate Labour Party to Neil Kinnock and completed reply, 13 June 1983

will inevitably be subject to reappraisal.⁶¹³ This may not have presaged the Policy Review which was to come four years later but it did reflect that Kinnock understood that an evaluation of policy was necessary in light of the election defeat.

The Times's Clifford Longley had provided a supportive article on Roy Hattersley in the event that he would launch a bid for the leadership. Longley recorded that he could be effective against 'what he considers to be disloyal elements on the Left' whilst 'also known to be highly scornful of those who left the Labour Party to found the Social Democrats,' adding that his loyalty to Foot and his comment on policies that he disagrees with 'saying it was important to be loyal to democratic decisions even if he personally regretted them.'⁶¹⁴

The centre-right union newspaper *Forward Labour* stated that it could not endorse either Hattersley or Peter Short for the leadership as both were presidents of the group and as such it would be a conflict of interest but did state that it supported the idea of the 'balanced ticket and derided Michael Meacher's opposition to such a notion.'⁶¹⁵

The prospect of the Kinnock/Hattersley ticket suggested that the prospect of a united party was achievable. Kinnock was to win support from across the party spectrum as indeed was Roy Hattersley for the deputy leadership. The results of the Fabians ballot for example showed that Kinnock won outright with 765 votes to his nearest Hattersley on 395. Hattersley was to win the first round narrowly for the deputy leadership against Kinnock but with the latter's second preference votes taken into account won by 1024 votes against the candidate who finished second, the Bennite MP for Oldham West Michael Meacher who won 317 votes.⁶¹⁶ Meacher's defeat represented a significant reversal of Benn's achievement in his bid for the

⁶¹³ Cambridge, Churchill College, Kinnock Papers, Churchill Archives, KNNK 2/1/12, 'We must unite in pursuit of power, Kinnock, Neil, *Tribune* article undated

⁶¹⁴ Cambridge, Churchill College, Kinnock Papers, Churchill Archives, KNNK 2/1/12, 'Hattersley leadership chance,' Langley, Clifford, *The Times*, 4 June 1983

⁶¹⁵ Cambridge, Churchill College, Kinnock Papers, Churchill Archives, KNNK 2/1/12, 'Hard Left Divide Over Ballot Tactics', *Forward Labour*, Issue No.17, June 1983, p.2

⁶¹⁶ Cambridge, Churchill College, Kinnock Papers, Churchill Archives, KNNK 2/1/12, Leadership Elections: Result of Fabian Ballot, Fabian Society Press Release, undated

deputy leadership in 1981. This was not to say that the Campaign group was lacking in influence but in comparison to only two years previously Meacher's result was a very poor return.

The final result was to see Neil Kinnock elected on the third ballot with seventy one percent of the vote,⁶¹⁷ with Roy Hattersley elected as Deputy with sixty seven percent to Michael Meacher's twenty eight percent.⁶¹⁸ The election of Kinnock and Hattersley represented a leader from the soft left faction of the Labour Party with a deputy representing the Croslandite revisionist tradition, both followers of men who had been on opposite sides of the divide during the Gaitskell-Bevan era. Gaitskell and Bevan had eventually come together as leader and deputy after a period of demoralising electoral defeats and internal party division, providing a neat parallel with Kinnock and Hattersley's election. Both Kinnock and Hattersley would remain at the helm for almost a decade as the party painfully readjusted to a position where it could be seriously considered an alternative party of Government. In the present meantime however, the work of stabilising a party that had been severely beaten by the Conservatives and narrowly avoided finishing third in a general election to a party comprising of former colleagues began in earnest.

The Miners' Strike

The decision of Arthur Scargill to send his members out on strike on 15 March 1984 in support of unofficial strikes occurring elsewhere in the country set off the longest period of industrial action since the General Strike. Scargill's decision not to hold a ballot of his membership and the outbreaks of violence were to provide valuable ammunition for the Conservative Government, keen to avenge and expunge the memory of Scargill's last action in 1973 which had led to the calling of the 1974 General Election and the defeat of the Heath Government.

⁶¹⁷ Keith Laybourn, *A Century of Labour: A History of the Labour Party, 1900-2000* (New edition) (Sparkford: J.H. Haynes & Co, Limited, 2001), p.134

⁶¹⁸ Westlake, *Kinnock*, p.240

As Keith Laybourn notes, the support that Scargill received at the TUC Conference in 1984 presented a problem for Kinnock, 'a mixture of reaction and radicalism that threatened to blow off course his attempt to give the Labour Party an image of moderation.'⁶¹⁹ Martin Westlake observed that for Kinnock 'the miners' strike...placed him in an impossible position and, however it ended, threatened to prove both highly damaging both to his leadership and his strategy for Labour's electoral recovery.'⁶²⁰ For Kinnock there had to be a fine line to be trodden between support for the miners themselves and attacking the leadership of them. Westlake notes how Kinnock gave a speech at the Annual Durham Miner's Gala in July 1984 when Kinnock attacked Mrs. Thatcher's response to the strike saying 'People who don't know this industry, people who don't know miners and miners' families and communities ask why you put up such a fight. The answer is a single phrase: There is no alternative.'⁶²¹ The strike was also to provide Kinnock with an opportunity to move the party away from the perceived militancy of certain sections of the Labour Movement, with Scargill's being one of the most obvious.

The defeat of the Miners' Strike in March 1985 was a pyrrhic victory for Kinnock. Whatever personal and political animosity that he felt towards Arthur Scargill was tempered by a sympathy for those taking industrial action over pit closures. At the Party Conference that took place in Bournemouth from 29 September until 4 October 1985, Scargill gave a speech pushing for a full reimbursement of the National Union of Mineworkers' losses over the last year 'only a third of delegates stood for Mr Scargill and some even booed him at the end of the debate when he insisted on pressing his union's proposition to a vote.'⁶²² The proposition passed but Kinnock was to use his leader's speech as the opportunity to attack not only Scargill but also the matter of Militant.

⁶¹⁹ Laybourn, *A Century of Labour*, p.136

⁶²⁰ Westlake, *Kinnock*, p. 291

⁶²¹ Westlake, *Kinnock* . p.292

⁶²² Julian Haviland, Philip Webster, Anthony Bevin, 'Scargill wins vote but fails to affect Labour manifesto', *The Times*, 3 October 1985, p.1

Kinnock's speech to the Party Conference on 1 October 1985 has passed into Labour folklore as 'that speech' yet it came under a period of intense pressure for Kinnock. For the first eighteen months of his leadership, any hopes of setting the agenda in taking on the Conservative Government had been affected by the matters of the Miner's Strike and the issues of the control of Liverpool City Council by Militant members, most notably Derek Hatton. Kinnock would have felt even further pressure when on 30 September 1985 a poll of Labour activists was published in *The Times* which gave him a mixed opinion on how he was performing as leader, with further embarrassment caused by seventy eight percent of those asked saying large city corporations should be nationalised.⁶²³ Nevertheless, Kinnock was to attack Militant in turn with a ferocity which was warmly greeted by the majority of delegates who had felt 'admiration mixed with astonishment. No Labour leader in modern times has dared rebuked any section of his party with such directness.'⁶²⁴

As can be expected, the far left viewed the speech with contempt, emphasised during the speech by Eric Heffer walking off the Conference platform and out of the hall. Tony Benn accused Kinnock of releasing 'the hatred of the Tory press against his own people in the middle of a struggle in the hope that he pick up the ex-Labour voters who supported Owen, knowing full well that real socialists and the rump of the working class have no alternative but to vote for him.'⁶²⁵ Hilary Wainwright was to be more guarded, arguing that 'expulsion, suspension and disbandment may do short-term wonders for the image of the present Leader, but I doubt if it does much to strengthen the political culture and popular base of the party, the weakness of which was, after all, the cause of Militant's strength.'⁶²⁶

The effect had been galvanising. *The Times*' Julian Haviland reported that 'delegates from the trade union and constituency sections spilled out of the hall in delight, congratulating each

⁶²³ 'Activists split on Kinnock', *The Times*, 30 September 1985, p.4

⁶²⁴ Julian Haviland, 'Kinnock speech a masterpiece, say moderates', *The Times*, 2 October 1985, p.1

⁶²⁵ Tony Benn, *The End of an Era: Diaries 1980-90* (London: Arrow Books, 1994), p.424

⁶²⁶ Hilary Wainwright, *Labour: A Tale of Two Parties* (London: Chato and Windus Ltd, 1987), p.135

other that they had a leader.'⁶²⁷ Kinnock's role in the attack on Militant was such that Giles Radice said that he 'would be forever grateful for taking on the Trots.'⁶²⁸ Radice felt that it required someone from the left to take on Militant and his speech at the party conference at Bournemouth in 1985 was to provide a public denunciation of the far left which would have played well to those who had despaired at the tactics of those who had been accused of controlling local CLP meetings. The battle over the expulsion of Militant would proceed into a tortuous battle that lasted into the following year and those who were members of the organisation and MPs would remain in the party until the end of the decade. Yet whilst both events were to show Kinnock as a tough leader and someone willing to take on one of the most powerful trade unions and also a group that had gained infamy both inside and outside the party took up valuable time that could have been spent on preparing for elections and looking as though they were a viable alternative Government. Labour would make advances in the local elections in May 1986 but this would be a brief moment of celebration.

Greenwich and the Local Elections of May 1987

Labour's prospects were to be tested by two sets of elections that were to take place in early 1987. The first was a parliamentary by-election and the second the local Government elections. From being in a strong position in the opinion polls at the end of 1986 and having done well in the Local Elections that same year, Labour began 1987 with optimism and this was further heightened by tensions which had continued to play out between the SDP and the Liberals.

The strains within the Alliance, which had been in evidence since its formation, had continued to plague both of the two parties particularly regarding the coordination and development of policy. As the Alliance was devised as a practical format to help provide a unified operation whilst maintaining the two parties separate identities, tensions had arisen on matters of

⁶²⁷ Julian Haviland, 'Kinnock speech a masterpiece, say moderates', *The Times*, 2 October 1985, p.1

⁶²⁸ Interview with Giles Radice, 28 November 2012

organisation and selection of candidates for election, most notably in the immediate formation of the SDP and the question of which party should stand a candidate in the slew of by-elections that took place in the early Eighties. With such an unwieldy structure of cooperation in place and with cynics on in either party resistant to the potential to closer union, it was inevitable that policy disagreements would erupt. In 1986 David Steel had suffered an embarrassing reverse at the Liberal Assembly at Eastbourne when delegates rejected the principle of an independent nuclear deterrent by 652 votes to 625. The MP for Bermondsey, Simon Hughes, said that the decision to stand against the notion of Britain holding an independent nuclear capability was a long-standing Liberal policy and a reason for him to be in the party, saying that 'many of us joined this party because of its aim and its goal, a non-nuclear Europe in a non-nuclear world. We have never voted to replace independent nuclear deterrent. The battle is for our future.' It was a question of being 'proud of all that we stand for,' a sentiment echoed by delegate Frances Thirlway who asked the party rhetorically 'have you really changed so much in two years?'⁶²⁹

This setback was particularly embarrassing as SDP leader David Owen had been a proponent of an agreement to coordinate nuclear weapons policy with the French as a replacement for Polaris. There was the irony of the Social Democrats being at odds with its Alliance partners considering unilateralism had been a long-standing issue of dispute being a contributing factor to the formation of the SDP and this development was quickly exploited by both the Conservatives and Labour who were at pains to highlight the logistical difficulties the Alliance would face should it be in a position of power sharing.

Unfortunately whatever satisfaction that Labour may have enjoyed with regards to the SDP's travails were to be compounded by its own performance in the by-election at Greenwich. The calling of the election at Greenwich was caused by the untimely death of the Labour MP Guy

⁶²⁹ 'Liberals at Eastbourne', *The Guardian*, 24 September 1986, p.3. See also *ITN News at Ten*, 23 September 1986, accessed via https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k_IVyfXL_58, [accessed 23 June 2017]

Barnett, who had held the seat since winning it via by election in 1971. Greenwich had been narrowly retained at the General Election four years earlier and was hoped to be held comfortably by Labour and thus providing a timely morale boost ahead of any anticipated general election. Labour also hoped to capitalise on the difficulties within the Alliance which had dropped back nationally in polling, fluctuating between the low twenties to mid-teens.⁶³⁰ Such optimism was understandable following an opinion poll published on 11 January 1987 which gave Labour a thirty-five point lead over the Conservatives on second place with twenty-five percent and the Alliance in third place with fifteen percent.⁶³¹

Whilst support for Labour still appeared to be strong, there were ominous signs for the party coming from Greenwich that pointed to disaffection with the party amongst the local electorate. The former Labour – now SDP – MP for neighbouring Woolwich, John Cartwright, played on Labour's defence policy and the fears that some of those who worked in the defence industry (which made up around two thousand people in both Woolwich and Greenwich): 'in 1983, nothing did more to shake up the traditional working class vote than their perception of Labour's defence policy.'⁶³² The Labour candidate, Deidre Wood, was a Labour representative for the Inner London Education Authority and was seen as being a left-winger with an equivocal viewpoint with regards to membership of the NATO alliance: 'I believe we have a good Labour Party policy and I support that policy. My personal views are at this point mixed. I'm quite happy that we stay in NATO.'⁶³³ The SDP had made no secret of their desire to see Wood as the Labour candidate, hoping that it would help to reinforce their campaign which emphasised the perceived 'Loony Left' nature of Wood's political stances and as someone who had 'consistently voted with the hard left on the Ilea and before that the Greater London Council.'⁶³⁴⁶³⁵ Hopes of tactical voting also helped to fuel the possibility that the SDP could

⁶³⁰ *UK Polling Report: 1983-1987 Polls*, <http://ukpollingreport.co.uk/voting-intention-1983-1987>, [accessed 13 September 2017]

⁶³¹ Peter Kellner, 'Shock lead for Labour in key by-election', *The Observer*, 11 January 1987, p.1

⁶³² Andrew Rawnsley, 'SDP raises ghost of traditional Labour voter', *The Guardian*, 6 February 1987, p.3

⁶³³ Andrew Rawnsley, 'SDP raises ghost of traditional Labour voter'

⁶³⁴ Martin Linton, 'Loony left' poll campaign may misfire', *The Guardian*, 26 January 1987, p.2

⁶³⁵ Martin Linton, 'Hard left candidate selected', *The Guardian*, 2 February 1987, p.2

achieve a victory that according to opinion polls had seemed unlikely at the turn of the year,⁶³⁶ to the extent that Shirley Williams was to tell the SDP's Scottish Conference on 22 February 1987 that they should not be afraid of Labour strongholds and that 'in Greenwich we will take the castle.'⁶³⁷

On 26 February 1987, the Social Democrats won the Greenwich by-election with Rosie Barnes winning with 18,287 votes, a majority of over six thousand over Labour's Deidre Wood. As David McKie noted it was only the eighth time since 1945 that an opposition party lost one of its seats, describing the result as 'abject,'⁶³⁸ and failing to match the vote it took in 1983.⁶³⁹ Crewe and King noted it was the first time that the SDP had won a seat from Labour in its six years in existence, having previously been successful in previously Conservative held constituencies.⁶⁴⁰ Crewe and King saw the election outcome as 'a real political event with real political consequences,' as Neil Kinnock's authority and Labour's polling numbers being particularly hit.⁶⁴¹ On two occasions, 17 and 23 March Gallup had polls which put the Alliance in second place behind the Conservatives, raising hopes of a renewal of the SDP and Liberal fortunes and reversing the decline it had been suffering since the 1983 election. Crewe and King's assertion that Greenwich was a safe Labour seat is contentious by the fact that it was a three-way marginal as a consequence of the general election but the outcome was still a shock for Labour. Giles Radice was to note in his diaries, 'The SDP candidate wins by 6,000 votes – the Tory vote collapses to 11%. One could argue that Mrs Thatcher might now hold back from having an election but the real news is the Labour debacle.'⁶⁴² It was to be the last highpoint for the SDP before its eventual merger with the Liberals in 1988 and the only Labour seat that was to be taken. The momentum that Labour had been gathering was halted, with

⁶³⁶ Andrew Rawnsley, 'Tactical vote may topple Labour bastion', *The Guardian*, 14 February 1987, p.2

⁶³⁷ John Carvel, 'Williams sets sights on Labour bastions', *The Guardian*, 23 February 1987, p.2

⁶³⁸ David McKie, 'SDP triumphs in Greenwich by 6,500 votes', *The Guardian*, 27 February 1987, p.1

⁶³⁹ 'SDP savours first win at Labour's expense', David McKie, *The Guardian*, 27 February 1987, p.5

⁶⁴⁰ Ivor Crewe and Anthony King, *SDP: The Birth, Life, and Death of the Social Democratic Party*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), p.361

⁶⁴¹ Crewe and King, *SDP: The Birth, Life and Death of the Social Democratic Party*, p.361

⁶⁴² Radice, *Diaries 1980-2001*, p.155

Radice ruefully remarking that it was 'so depressing that we are now almost back where we were in 1983.'⁶⁴³

The Local Government elections of 1987 were to also offer little comfort to Labour and presented a marked contrast to the polls of the previous year. In 1986 the Conservatives had suffered heavy losses of seven hundred seats, three quarters of them to Labour who in turn saw them gain control of seventeen councils. This was in conjunction with the Tories losing the Ryedale by-election to the Alliance and only narrowly holding the seat of West Derbyshire in another poll by only one hundred votes. Labour had been bullish about its prospects with Jack Straw mocking the Conservatives in *The Guardian* on 6 February 1987: 'Manchester is bad mouthed daily by the Conservative press. Yet Labour cannot help winning seats and the Tories cannot help losing them.'⁶⁴⁴ However the outcome at Greenwich had changed such hopes; from being in front of the Conservatives with forty percent to the Tories thirty-eight percent on 28 January 1987, Labour were now fourteen points behind going into the May elections.⁶⁴⁵ The accompanying results for Labour were to be similarly chastening, losing council seats in Trafford (which it had hoped to win control of), lost seats in Dudley and Birmingham and struggled to keep hold of Wolverhampton City Council due to losses to the Conservatives. Labour also lost three seats in Manchester, rendering Jack Straw's previous boast somewhat hollow.⁶⁴⁶ What comfort there was for Labour was provided by the holding of Liverpool with the Alliance failing to take control and the SDP and Liberals not performing as well as had been anticipated. Despite the Party's General Secretary Larry Whitty professing the belief that 'the momentum is in our direction', the auguries presented by the local elections did not bode well for Labour should an election be announced. Three days later Margaret Thatcher announced a general election for 11 June.

⁶⁴³ Radice, *Diaries 1980-2001*. p.156

⁶⁴⁴ Jack Straw, 'Goodbye to gauleiter politics', *The Guardian*, 6 February 1987, p.9

⁶⁴⁵ *UK Polling Report: 1983-1987 Polls*, <http://ukpollingreport.co.uk/voting-intention-1983-1987> [accessed 13 September 2017]

⁶⁴⁶ Geoff Andrews, Tory support holds solid in local elections, *The Guardian*, 8 May 1987, p.1

The General Election of 1987

Despite the shock of Greenwich and the poor showing in the local elections in May, Labour went into the election of 1987 with a degree of confidence not borne by the showing in opinion polling. After narrowly leading the Conservatives for much of the previous year, by May 1987 Labour were 14 points behind on 30 percent.⁶⁴⁷ Yet in comparison to the haphazard and seemingly shambolic efforts of four years previously, the 1987 election campaign was to be effective in its presentation and execution. Having endured the difficulties of the Miners' Strike and the trauma of the Militant expulsions, some within Labour went into the campaign with the expectations of some success: if not confident of outright victory then of at least rolling back much of the advances made by the Conservatives in 1983.

In an article written in *Marxism Today* prior to the election, Eric Hobsbawm noted that Labour had 'bounced back from the 1983 disaster with remarkable speed under Neil Kinnock's new leadership,' but offered that 'the best Labour can hope for realistically in what, like it or not, has become a three-way system of British politics, is that it will come out of the election as the largest party, or the largest non-Tory party in parliament.'⁶⁴⁸ Hobsbawm also put forward the proposition of tactical voting with the Alliance but warned that both the Liberals and the SDPs were aiming to remove Labour as the main opposition:

On the Alliance side (or rather on the SDP side, for the Liberals have been much more reticent in this respect), the argument is frankly that a Thatcher victory was a price well worth paying for the chance to ruin the Labour Party for good and come back after another five years of Thatcherism as the major, and hopefully the only, opposition force and alternative

⁶⁴⁷ *Voting Intentions in Great Britain 1976-1987*, via <https://www.ipsos.com/ipsos-mori/en-uk/voting-intentions-great-britain-1976-1987> [accessed 11 June 2017]

⁶⁴⁸ Eric Hobsbawm, 'Snatching Victory From Defeat', *Marxism Today*, May 1987, p.15, http://banmarchive.org.uk/collections/mt/index_frame.htm, [accessed 25 May 2014]

Government. (This, incidentally, is also the Thatcher scenario for the future of British politics.)⁶⁴⁹

The result in 1987 was to demonstrate that those previous Labour voters which had moved to the Social Democrats in 1983 had now shifted their votes to the Conservatives, seemingly shedding any aversion that they may have previously felt about voting Tory. This movement was evident in the drop in the Alliance vote in some constituencies from second to third in some of the more traditional Labour heartlands as the North-East, North-West and Wales. Four years earlier the Labour vote had collapsed in the South as voters moved to the Alliance and as a consequence strengthened the Conservative share. Now it was the Tories who were benefiting, consolidating their grip and only losing twenty-one seats. The share of the vote saw the Conservatives on just over forty-two percent, only a fraction down on their performance in 1983, whilst Labour improved to just under thirty-one percent. The drop in the Alliance vote to twenty-two percent seemed to favour Labour nationally but did not translate as such in the constituencies.

‘Aims and Values’ – Towards the Policy Review

The defeat of June 1987 saw Kinnock and Hattersley remain as leader and deputy despite another heavy landslide victory for the Conservatives. Whilst the defeat was a bitter one to contemplate, Labour was able to take some positives from the outcome. Firstly, they had recovered from the polling position achieved in 1983 and attained almost thirty one percent of the vote, up over three percent from four years before.

Secondly, they were to see their representation in Scotland increase as the expense of the Conservatives, the Alliance parties and the Scottish Nationalist Party. The results in Scotland bore particular enjoyment for Labour when they gained the seat of Glasgow Hillhead from the

⁶⁴⁹ Hobsbawm, ‘Snatching Victory From Defeat’, *Marxism Today*, p.15, http://banmarchive.org.uk/collections/mt/index_frame.htm, [accessed 25 May 2014]

former SDP leader Roy Jenkins, won by the left-wing and early Kinnock supporter George Galloway.

Thirdly, results in London, whilst mixed, were to see the first black MPs in the House of Commons representing Labour, Diane Abbott in Hackney, Paul Boateng in Brent South and Bernie Grant for Tottenham. Yet this achievement was marred by the Conservatives achieving some notable successes in the capital, including winning the seat of Battersea from Alfred Dubs, Nick Raynsford in Fulham and Eric Deakins in Walthamstow.

Labour were to lose six seats in total. The Labour right were to see Ken Weetch lose his seat in Ipswich, Weetch being an early supporter and contributor to Labour Solidarity. Meanwhile, as well as Abbott and Grant, the Campaign Group was to see its numbers bolstered by the election of Ken Livingstone in Brent East, the *bête noir* of the Conservative media and also the current Labour leadership. Meanwhile the Militant MPs Terry Fields in Liverpool Broadgreen, Dave Nellist in Coventry South and Pat Wall were re-elected in Bradford North. For all of Kinnock's efforts on the NEC with the issue of Militant in Liverpool, the organisation continued to maintain a presence in the PLP.

For Labour, defeat in 1987 also came against a backdrop of retreat and reappraisal of socialism globally and a continued domination of conservative parties in many Western states. As well as Thatcher's Conservatives recording their third consecutive general election victory, in the United States Ronald Reagan was coming to the end of his second term in office. In West Germany Helmut Kohl had been returned as Chancellor in January 1987 for a second time and as with Margaret Thatcher with a slightly reduced majority – the Christian Democrats/Christian Socialist Union had lost 21 seats, exactly the same number as the Conservatives in June 1987.⁶⁵⁰ In Italy the Christian Democrats were to be returned to Government a week after Thatcher's victory.

⁶⁵⁰ 'Kohl's less than emphatic order to carry on', *The Guardian*, 26 January 1987, p.16

The defeats of both 1983 and 1987 were to be the catalysts for the radical re-positioning of Labour within the political landscape, 1987 more so than result of four years previously. As Labour strove to deal with how it could move to a more accommodating position in which to reach out to an electorate which had now rejected them on three consecutive occasions, the Conservatives were able to implement their manifesto with impunity, including in the areas of social policy. In 1983 the Conservatives had said that 'dealing with crimes, civil disobedience, violent demonstrations and pornography are not matters for the police alone. It is teachers and parents - and television producers, too - who influence the moral standards of the next generation.'⁶⁵¹ The connection between violent crime and what was seen on the screen was made clear and in due course was legislated against in the form of the 1983 Video Recordings Act, seemingly assuaging the concerns of the public and meeting demands of a media driven campaign which had built up in the early 1980s. For the Conservatives this was a clearly defined moral mission and one in which it had the full support of the parties in Parliament.

By the mid-1980s, the reports of the arguments between central Government and local authorities had become a staple in tabloid newspapers. Stretching back to the 1970s, reference to 'Loony Left' councils had been made to highlight Labour councils which had been accused of using ratepayers' taxes on minority matters. As has been seen in the previous chapter, the use of the issue of homosexuality as a weapon against Labour had been deployed in the Bermondsey by-election, with some of the invective being led by disgruntled former Labour members objecting to the selection of Peter Tatchell as the candidate. The matter of gay rights and Labour's protracted policy development with respect to them had become an issue which been used as a point of attack by the Conservatives during the General Election. For some within Labour, the issue of gay rights could be dismissed as a niche issue of marginal interest. For Kinnock and the party leadership smarting from a series of bruising encounters

⁶⁵¹ *Conservative Party election manifesto 1983*, <http://www.politicsresources.net/area/uk/man/con83.htm> [accessed 9 July 2017]

over the matters of Militant and the Miners' Strike, such matters may have appeared peripheral and as Chapter Four demonstrated they had resulted in one of Labour's significant battles with the Conservatives in the latter part of the 1980s.

In response to the election defeat, the left-wing Labour Coordinating Committee (LCC) spoke of the need to reconnect with the working classes, sentiments the former MP Phillip Whitehead similarly expressed in 1983. The defeated Labour candidate for Putney and LCC executive committee member Peter Hain said that 'every Tory since the early hours of Friday morning has talked about the inner city and we see this as the next stage of the Government's attack on Labour's working class base, which we must get to grips with.'⁶⁵²

There was to be an inquest into the defeat which was to conclude that it had been a well-run campaign but one which had amounted to only a small advance on the nadir of 1983. Martin Westlake quoted the BBC Political Editor who remarked "To the surprise of all, Labour has beaten the Tories on the quality of its advertising, the deployment of its personalities and on packaging and organisation.'⁶⁵³ It took Norman Tebbit to pungently remark as the results were coming in to touch upon an uncomfortable truth for Labour: 'If as you hint and one or two other journalists have hinted they ran by far the best campaign, and I don't necessarily accept that, but we win then they must have been a lousy product.'⁶⁵⁴

The decision to put forward a review of all Labour policy was announced at the Party Conference on September 1987, based on an initial paper submitted by the Deputy General Secretary of the National Union of Public Employees (NUPE) Tom Sawyer entitled 'An Approach to Policy Making.'⁶⁵⁵ Yet from the outset the tensions were evident. As Westlake observed '1987 could never be year zero for Labour. The party could not suddenly deny its unique traditions and history; Kinnock could not now claim to have sprung fully formed from

⁶⁵² Martin Linton, 'Labour 'needs rethink to woo working class', *The Guardian*, 16 June 1987, p.2

⁶⁵³ Westlake, *Kinnock*, p.419

⁶⁵⁴ *BBC Election 87*, via <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=si796O6lltY>, [accessed 14 September 2017]

⁶⁵⁵ Westlake, *Kinnock*, p.425

the head of European Social Democracy.^{'656} The problem that Labour had to face up to was that 'in effect, the Policy Review process was Labour's coming to terms with Thatcherism.'⁶⁵⁷ Three consecutive defeats could not have suggested otherwise.

Prior to the commencement of the mooted review, the starting point of what the party was aspiring to achieve had to be determined. This was to manifest itself in the document 'A Statement of Democratic Socialist Aims and Values,' commenced by Roy Hattersley 'at Kinnock's behest'⁶⁵⁸ as a means of articulating a series of areas for discussion and how socialism would help to achieve these. Hughes and Wintour observed that Hattersley was seemingly frustrated by his own attempts, thinking that he was simply condensing what he had already set out in *Choose Freedom*, only to be assured by Kinnock that 'was exactly what he wanted.'⁶⁵⁹⁶⁶⁰ This underlined how Kinnock and Hattersley's approach to socialism was able to easily converge despite the former coming from a Bevanite tradition and Hattersley the Croslandite. 'A Statement of Democratic Socialist Aims and Values' was to be the testament setting out a new political settlement as envisaged by Kinnock and Hattersley, eschewing the ready suspicion of markets for a more open acceptance of them albeit with caveats. For Hughes and Wintour, *Aims and Values* was also a tactical device to ensure that a clear distinction could be made against both the SDP and the Bennites who many had been expecting to mount a leadership challenge: 'a genuine attempt to enshrine an enduring statement of democratic socialist faith that could clearly be distinguished from David Owen's version of social democracy on one side, and Soviet-style command economy socialism on the other.'⁶⁶¹

⁶⁵⁶ ⁶⁵⁶ Westlake, *Kinnock*, p.426

⁶⁵⁷ ⁶⁵⁷ Westlake, *Kinnock*, p.426

⁶⁵⁸ Colin Hughes and Patrick Wintour, *Labour Rebuilt: The New Model Party* (London: Fourth Estate, 1990) p.68

⁶⁵⁹ Hughes and Wintour, *Labour Rebuilt: The New Model Party*, p.68 and

⁶⁶⁰ Roy Hattersley, *Who Goes Home? – Scenes from a Political Life* (Great Britain, Little, Brown and Company, 1995), p.288

⁶⁶¹ Hughes and Wintour, *Labour Rebuilt: The New Model Party*, p.69

Aims and Values was to go through a number of amendment exchanges between Kinnock and Hattersley prior to its presentation to the shadow Cabinet on 5 February 1988.⁶⁶² Even after these amendments had taken place, both Kinnock and Hattersley were to find the paper criticised by a number of the shadow Cabinet who felt that the paper was too far in favour of the market, including Hattersley supporters as John Smith and Jack Cunningham to Kinnockites such as Robin Cook and Bryan Gould.⁶⁶³ As a result Kinnock and Hattersley agreed that the document should be considered by shadow Cabinet members and amendments received. Such amendments were thus put forward with comments on the replacing of sentences such as '...we believe, by using democratic institutions and collective and community activity...solidarity between people is the best guarantee of liberty and equality', stating that 'the idea is okay but badly expressed'.⁶⁶⁴ This was crossed out and replaced with 'But economic change will not in itself be able to build the society which socialists wish to create. We need a more equal distribution of power as well of wealth.'⁶⁶⁵ Also crossed out was the sentence which stated 'In a world where wealth and security will increasingly depend upon human ingenuity and natural resources, the key instruments of social, economic and industrial change cannot be left to the chance operation of the market.'⁶⁶⁶ A note at the side of the crossed out section read 'this is a near to total rejection of the market: the sort of wild swing that got us into previous trouble.'⁶⁶⁷

Further draft amendments were received from those outside the shadow Cabinet with one document received from Ken Livingstone. Livingstone encapsulated his objections to the document in the introduction stating that it contained a 'wrong conception of the relationship

⁶⁶² Hughes and Wintour, *Labour Rebuilt*, p.69

⁶⁶³ Hughes and Wintour, *Labour Rebuilt*, p.70; Roy Hattersley, *Who Goes Home? – Scenes from a Political Life* (Great Britain, Little, Brown and Company, 1995), p.291

⁶⁶⁴ Cambridge, Churchill College, Kinnock Papers, Churchill Archives, KNNK 2/2/5, 'A Statement of Democratic Socialist Aims and Values', undated

⁶⁶⁵ Cambridge, Churchill College, Kinnock Papers, Churchill Archives, KNNK 2/2/5, Draft 'A Statement of Democratic Socialist Aims and Values', undated

⁶⁶⁶ Cambridge, Churchill College, Kinnock Papers, Churchill Archives, KNNK 2/2/5, Draft 'A Statement of Democratic Socialist Aims and Values', undated

⁶⁶⁷ Cambridge, Churchill College, Kinnock Papers, Churchill Archives, KNNK 2/2/5, Draft 'A Statement of Democratic Socialist Aims and Values', undated

between democracy and socialism, its wrong position on social/public ownership, and its inadequate international framework for policy.⁶⁶⁸ In response to one of Livingstone's amendments, a briefing paper noted

He (Livingstone) argued that we should omit the phrase "mixed economy" which we want to retain as that is the reality; and wishes to substitute for it the phrase "the social ownership of the decisive sectors of the economy". He fails to explain what that phrase means – and we have said in the previous paragraph that we want to extend social ownership in the economy, and we are committed to public ownership of the utilities.⁶⁶⁹

The briefing note goes on to refute Livingstone's amendment in which he called for the elimination of all nuclear weapons, asserting that 'the international section of his proposals is clearly designed to put us on the spot on nuclear disarmament.'⁶⁷⁰ The comment then aims to couch the rejection in terms of efficacy asserting that 'once we concede the necessity to make policy commitments in one area we must make that concession throughout the document and therefore fundamentally change it.'⁶⁷¹

A month after the shadow Cabinet meeting, Labour's General Secretary Larry Whitty wrote to Kinnock on 17 March 1988 expressing that the lack of response from the PLP, the NEC and affiliated unions concerned him and expressed the frustration that 'expressions of view...do not seem able to be transferred onto paper!'⁶⁷² Whitty wrote that he had previously made his opinion of the draft of the *Aims and Values* document known, he confirmed again that he felt the document had to address three areas:

⁶⁶⁸ Cambridge, Churchill College, Kinnock Papers, Churchill Archives, KNNK 2/2/5, 'Amendments to the document "A Statement of Democratic Socialist Aims and Values"' by Ken Livingstone MP, undated

⁶⁶⁹ Cambridge, Churchill College, Kinnock Papers, Churchill Archives, KNNK 2/2/5, Briefing on Ken Livingstone's Amendments, undated

⁶⁷⁰ Cambridge, Churchill College, Kinnock Papers, Churchill Archives, KNNK 2/2/5, Briefing on Ken Livingstone's Amendments, undated

⁶⁷¹ Cambridge, Churchill College, Kinnock Papers, Churchill Archives, KNNK 2/2/5, Briefing on Ken Livingstone's Amendments, undated

⁶⁷² Cambridge, Churchill College, Kinnock Papers, Churchill Archives, KNNK 2/2/5, Letter from Larry Whitty to Neil Kinnock, 17 March 1988

- That the very positive approach to the individual liberty passages was not sufficiently tempered with the need to emphasise collective activity and democratic action as a means of achieving and fulfilling individual liberty;
- The need for a lengthier international section;
- The need to strengthen the economic section and state the 'market issue' in terms more acceptable to the party.⁶⁷³

Whitty went on to write that whilst he disagreed 'with much of what Ken Livingstone's draft is trying to do, there are also some very valid points in there which we should take seriously.'⁶⁷⁴

Despite the involvement and contribution of Kinnock, 'A Statement of Democratic Socialist Aims and Values' was very much Hattersley's (even though he had been reluctant in undertaking it). However, Hughes and Wintour's criticism that Kinnock 'barely used the document for its designed purpose' is undermined by their following assertion that it was 'a staging post on the way to delivering the Policy Review.'⁶⁷⁵ Hughes' and Wintour's attestation that Kinnock's belief 'that politics was not so much visionary utterance, as a matter of what you could win, today and tomorrow'⁶⁷⁶ also contradicted their previous observation that 'Kinnock's belief in a politics of proficient caring was boiled down, it sat only a pigeon-step away from Hattersley's more loftily articulated philosophies.'⁶⁷⁷ There is no doubt that a part of the production of '*Aims and Values*' as a precursor to the Policy Review could be used as vantage point in which to finally take on the Hard Left decisively but it is perhaps overly cynical to suggest that Kinnock's motives were less than genuine. Labour had suffered three consecutive defeats and thus it was imperative to understand why the party had lost just it had

⁶⁷³ Cambridge, Churchill College, Kinnock Papers, Churchill Archives, KNNK 2/2/5, Letter from Larry Whitty to Neil Kinnock, 17 March 1988

⁶⁷⁴ Cambridge, Churchill College, Kinnock Papers, Churchill Archives, KNNK 2/2/5, Letter from Larry Whitty to Neil Kinnock, 17 March 1988

⁶⁷⁵ Hughes and Wintour, *Labour Rebuilt: The New Model Party*, p.70

⁶⁷⁶ Hughes and Wintour, *Labour Rebuilt* . p.74

⁶⁷⁷ Hughes and Wintour, *Labour Rebuilt* p.67

been in the 1950s. It was not a soft option for Kinnock to set the party on to a programme of policy examination but repeated defeat necessitated action, hence his speech to the PLP on 9 March 1988 in which he stated 'the Party and its members have too often fallen back on sentimentality or gestures to give definition to our aims, or fallen victim to opportunism, or simply waited for experience of injustice or dissatisfaction to bring people back into the fold.'⁶⁷⁸ This was the 'realist left' interfacing with the 'pragmatic right', and Kinnock (as he asserted almost thirty years later) always saw his politics as being pragmatic. *Kinnockism*, if there was such a thing, was therefore manifesting itself as less the soft leftism of his mentor Michael Foot and more a soft revisionism.

For Roy Hattersley, whilst *Aims and Means* may have been the precursor to the Policy Review for which he was to view part of the consultation process, *Labour Listens*, with disdain, it nonetheless was an attempt for the ideas he had already set out in his book *Choose Freedom* which came out in 1987 and set out how he saw socialism. *Choose Freedom* was to see Hattersley stress that the pursuit of equality and the ensuring of personal freedoms were what defined socialism and that this was very much in the tradition of Croslandite revisionist social democracy. Hattersley took aim at the assertion put forward by Herbert Morrison that 'socialism is what the Labour Party happens to be doing at any one time' stating that 'as a description of a complex and comprehensive ideology, the most that can be said of that definition is that its pragmatic convenience almost compensates for its intellectual inadequacy.'⁶⁷⁹

Hattersley's theme for *Choose Freedom* was liberty and the freedom of people to have more responsibility and a more individualistic approach, very much in the Croslandite tradition, calling for more acknowledgment of the usefulness of the markets whilst cautioning against their introduction into areas of public provision such as health, social and education services

⁶⁷⁸ Cambridge, Churchill College, Kinnock Papers, Churchill Archives, KNNK 2/2/5, Draft Neil Kinnock speech to the PLP with amendments, 9 March 1988

⁶⁷⁹ Roy Hattersley, *Choose Freedom*, (London: Penguin Books, 1987), p.3

and calling for the public utilities to be 'socially owned and remain as central corporations with a national plan for their overall performance.'⁶⁸⁰ Hattersley also maintained the Croslandite line of nationalisation not necessarily being the answer to the provision of equality, arguing that 'if we believe that socialism is about an extension of freedom brought about by a more equal distribution of resources we have to encourage that extension in every part of society. State monopolies are not the most fertile ground for the diffusion of power.'⁶⁸¹

Hattersley was also conciliatory towards the trade unions, noting their support for shareholdings through employee stock-ownership plans (ESOPS) and calling for their support in ensuring the 'extensions of personal rights and powers' of the individual through collective action.⁶⁸²

Hattersley was essentially arguing that Labour, not based on any one particular ideological strand as stated by Tawney (and quoted by Crosland at the start of this thesis) had to state its ideology in proud terms, noting that 'the coalition of objectives' that emerged during the Attlee era was needed again, 'that combination of philosophy and pragmatism (which) creates a genuinely united Labour Party – an indispensable ingredient of victory.'⁶⁸³ It was about ideology allied to relevance, a need to recreate the Attlee era 'coalition of objectives' which had 'enabled a united party to speak for a wide spectrum of national opinion' and overcoming the phenomenon that had taken hold after the Wilson and Callaghan years, as 'conservatism seemed novel and socialism a continuation of the status quo. An ideologically based party of the right made a pragmatic party of the left seem dull and unadventurous.'⁶⁸⁴ What was required to recreate 'the coalition of objectives' was 'a fundamental change in our attitude

⁶⁸⁰ Hattersley, *Choose Freedom*, p.171

⁶⁸¹ Hattersley, *Choose Freedom*, p.171

⁶⁸² Hattersley, *Choose Freedom* p.206

⁶⁸³ Hattersley, *Choose Freedom* p.251

⁶⁸⁴ Hattersley, *Choose Freedom*, pp.252-253

towards the party's ideology – not in the ideology itself but in the clarity with which it is expressed.⁶⁸⁵

Hattersley, the more ideological of the partnership, in concert with Kinnock's more apparently flexible approach, had now set the party on a course on a significant re-evaluation on what the party actually stood for.

The Policy Review

The Policy Review was set in seven discussion groups on areas including the economy, people at work, economic equality, consumers, civil liberties, foreign policy and the environment. This was to be augmented by *Labour Listens*, a series of meetings between the public and Labour politicians across the country. These meetings were not viewed with much enthusiasm by some of the shadow cabinet, with Roy Hattersley writing in his memoirs that *Labour Listens* was 'an organised farce.'⁶⁸⁶ In *Choose Freedom*, Hattersley had warned that 'if we leave the ideas to be argued out in small groups at Fabian teas and New Statesman seminars, we will fail again into the abyss which engulfed us in 1945.'⁶⁸⁷ Westlake notes also that Bryan Gould, previously a strong advocate of a public consultation was 'less ready to abandon Labour's existing ideological commitments than some of the younger generation of modernisers such as Tony Blair and Jack Straw.'⁶⁸⁸ Sarah Benton for *Marxism Today* observed that there was further animosity from those in the Campaign group at the exercise:

Naturally, there are many in the Labour Party who are not in sympathy with the project.

"I can work under a red rose, I can even work under a pink rose, but I can't work under an ear-trumpet", Tony Benn is reported as saying. Why magnify the voices of those duped by Thatcherism into wanting private shares? For the hard Left, there is no need

⁶⁸⁵ Hattersley, *Choose Freedom*, p.253

⁶⁸⁶ Hattersley, *Who Goes Home*, p.283

⁶⁸⁷ Hattersley, *Choose Freedom*, p.253

⁶⁸⁸ Westlake, Kinnock, p.429

for a fundamental review because the fundamentals of socialism are beyond dispute.⁶⁸⁹

In Benton's article, Tom Sawyer stated that the aims of the exercise were 'more modest than either detractors or visionaries anticipate', with adding the hope that "'I didn't want the party to tear itself apart after three election defeats in a row,'" with Benton observing that 'such self-destruction was widely anticipated nine months ago'.⁶⁹⁰

In a confidential memorandum to the Home Policy Committee in July 1987 drafted by Geoff Bish of the Policy Directorate, it outlined bluntly what was seen to be required 'If we are to succeed in that election – if we are to succeed as a Government – our policies must be attractive and credible in terms of the realities and opportunities of the 1990s,' adding that it must not look 'backward to the missed opportunities of the seventies and eighties.'⁶⁹¹ Acknowledging that 'unlike prior to 1983' Labour had been undertaking updates to policy prepared between the NEC and the shadow Cabinet which had allowed the party 'to present a united approach on all the main policy issues', the memorandum stated that 'what we did not attempt in these years, however, was as more fundamental and radical review of our main policies. The time is now ripe, we suggest, to set in hand just such a review – and to do so in each of the main policy areas.'⁶⁹² Any proposed review, added the memorandum had to 'be seen to address itself to the realities and problems of the 1990s', particularly in the areas of international relations and the environment; 'to relate to the real needs, demands and aspirations of ordinary people, as individuals, not to have 'policies which do not look as though they have been dusted down or reworked from the Labour Programme of 1976 and 1982,';

⁶⁸⁹ Sarah Benton 'Rethinking Labour: Reaching New Parts', *Marxism Today*, April 1988, p.12, http://banmarchive.org.uk/collections/mt/index_frame.htm, [accessed 25 May 2014]

⁶⁹⁰ Sarah Benton 'Rethinking Labour: Reaching New Parts'

⁶⁹¹ Cambridge, Churchill College, Kinnock Papers, Churchill Archives, KNNK 2/2/1, Confidential Memorandum from Geoff Bish to the Home Policy Committee, 'Policy Development for the 1990s', PD1052/July 1987, July 1987, p.1

⁶⁹² I Cambridge, Churchill College, Kinnock Papers, Churchill Archives, KNNK 2/2/1, Confidential Memorandum from Geoff Bish to the Home Policy Committee, 'Policy Development for the 1990s', PD1052/July 1987, July 1987 p.2

and 'provide a clear expression of the core values of the party.'⁶⁹³ The Policy Review was to encompass three phases: Listening, initiating new policy work and finally the publication of the results of the Review itself.⁶⁹⁴ In an undated note that Kinnock had made during a meeting of the NEC (presumably the September meeting of the Home Policy Committee that Tom Sawyer's paper was to be submitted), he had written that the concern was that any review 'could be presented as concession to Thatcherism. We look opportunistic.'⁶⁹⁵

There was a developing theme on liberty and freedom being pursued in one of the Policy Review Groups which connected to Labour's social liberal traditions. In an undated memorandum from the 'Policy Review Group on Democracy for the Individual and the Community', it stated that in order to ensure 'equal access to the law to secure equal treatment' to ensure equality in the eyes of employers regardless of gender, it also added that legislation would be needed to prevent discrimination against people with disabilities. It also stated that the issue of discrimination against gay and lesbian people had increased with the advent of Section 28 (see Chapter Four) and declared that:

...there is no doubt that discrimination on the grounds of sexuality is increasing. Clause 28 of the Local Government Act is the latest manifestation of this. It is an assault on civil liberties and freedom of expression. It must be repealed. Lesbians and gays must have the same freedom from discrimination and prejudice and the same freedoms to live their lives as other people.⁶⁹⁶

Labour's position on defence, nuclear weapons and the issue of unilateral disarmament was to be particularly contentious. The Britain and the World Policy Review Group had seen Gerald

⁶⁹³ Cambridge, Churchill College, Kinnock Papers, Churchill Archives, KNNK 2/2/1, Confidential Memorandum from Geoff Bish to the Home Policy Committee, '*Policy Development for the 1990s*', PD1052/July 1987, July 1987

⁶⁹⁴ Cambridge, Churchill College, Kinnock Papers, Churchill Archives, KNNK 2/2/1, Letter from Tom Sawyer to Neil Kinnock, LS/IN/9.2 and '*An Approach to Policy Making*,' 23 July 1987, p.1

⁶⁹⁵ Cambridge, Churchill College, Kinnock Papers, Churchill Archives, KNNK 2/2/1, undated note, September 1987

⁶⁹⁶ Cambridge, Churchill College, Kinnock Papers, Churchill Archives, KNNK 2/2/5, undated memorandum from the 'Policy Review Group on Democracy for the Individual and the Community', 1988

Kaufman and Mike Gapes heading a party delegation to the headquarters of NATO where commitment to membership to the Atlantic Alliance was reaffirmed and how the US viewed the recent initiative to reduce nuclear stockpiles by Mikhail Gorbachev positively, but that the US wished for Britain to maintain its nuclear capability.⁶⁹⁷ On 1 January 1989, Peter Smith of the think tank Just Defence submitted papers on defence spending to Charles Clarke for passing to Kinnock adding that that they were also due to meet with the Britain in the World Policy Review Group. Smith noted that a speech that Mikhail Gorbachev had given to the United Nations had 'moved the goal posts to some extent' but that it 'only served to underline the case we are making for a move towards a non-provocative defence strategy.'⁶⁹⁸ The changes in the international arena and the advent of *Perestroika* and *Glasnost* under Gorbachev's leadership meant that Labour could now think in terms of modernising and reducing Britain's nuclear capability gradually as part of a wider international framework.

Such a change in policy was anticipated to be controversial, so much so that on 13 November 1988, Malcolm Dando had submitted a paper titled 'Well, Mr Kinnock, can we now turn to Labour's new Defence Policy?' which asked hypothetical questions Labour could be expected due the change in policy, stating that 'there is a need for Labour to argue the case for disarmament loud and clear from now on, whatever the possible outcome of the policy review. Our own differences are about the means to achieve disarmament. Our differences with the present Government are over ends.'⁶⁹⁹ This would be followed in June 1989 with a background briefing document explaining the changes to the policy compiled by Mike Gapes of the Britain in the World PRG.⁷⁰⁰ The move to a change in defence policy was to prove objectionable to those who supported unilateralism. On 7 March 1989, Jeremy Corbyn as Secretary of the

⁶⁹⁷ Cambridge, Churchill College, Kinnock Papers, Churchill Archives, KNNK 2/2/28, confidential memorandum from the Britain in the World Policy Review Group – Delegation to NATO and SHAPE, 12 – 13 December 1988, PD(l)1893: Jan89, Mike Gapes, 30 December 1988

⁶⁹⁸ Cambridge, Churchill College, Kinnock Papers, Churchill Archives, KNNK 2/2/30, letter from Peter Smith to Charles Clarke, 1 January 1989

⁶⁹⁹ Cambridge, Churchill College, Kinnock Papers, Churchill Archives, KNNK 2/2/30, Malcolm Dando, 'Well, Mr Kinnock, can we now turn to Labour's new Defence Policy?', 13 November 1988

⁷⁰⁰ Cambridge, Churchill College, Kinnock Papers, Churchill Archives, KNNK 2/2/44, Mike Gapes, Policy Directorate Background Briefing document, 'Labour's Defence Policy: Forty Questions and Answers', June 1989

Campaign group of MPs and the coordinator of the Campaign for Non-Alignment issued a press release calling NATO to be disbanded declaring that 'opposition to NATO and its ever growing demands for new and more potent nuclear weapons and its control over national defence budgets is growing fast.'⁷⁰¹ This demonstrated that Labour's return to the policy area of multilateralism that had caused division since Gaitskell would continue to be controversial.

Similarly, the Britain in the World Policy Review Group also proposed 'a socialist vision of the European Community'⁷⁰², supporting the enlargement of the EC, the European Political Cooperation mechanism coordinating Community foreign policy and support for the Single European Act provided scrutiny of policy making was made available for sovereign parliaments.⁷⁰³ This again was anathema for those who had opposed membership of the EEC and latterly the EC (opposition mainly to be found but not exclusively on the Hard Left).

As has been noted in the introduction, Tribune had been particularly scathing towards the production of the *Aims and Means* document. Inevitably the proposals to scale back the emphasis on nationalisation and unilateralism in the Review led to some on the left to unsurprisingly protest at the proposals. Yet by the time of the publication of the draft *Campaign Briefing* document on 30 May 1989⁷⁰⁴, the draft Policy Review consultations were ready for public consumption. The following month, Neil Stewart wrote to Larry Whitty noting that whilst the launch of the Policy Review had gone well and 'the first important hurdles in union conferences had been overcome,' the concerns within the leadership that 'the focus on defence means that other important changes in emphasis in the Review have not been fully

⁷⁰¹ Cambridge, Churchill College, Kinnock Papers, Churchill Archives, KNNK 2/2/30, *Press Release, EmbargoED16.15hrs March 7 1989, NATO and Unilateralism*, Jeremy Corbyn, 7 March 1989

⁷⁰² Cambridge, Churchill College, Kinnock Papers, Churchill Archives, KNNK 2/2/30, PRG Britain and the World, Draft Section of the Final Report on EC Affairs (II), PD(I)2062, March 1989, p.1

⁷⁰³ Cambridge, Churchill College, Kinnock Papers, Churchill Archives, KNNK 2/2/30, PRG Britain and the World, Draft Section of the Final Report on EC Affairs (II), PD(I)2062, March 1989, p.1 pp.3-7

⁷⁰⁴ Cambridge, Churchill College, Kinnock Papers, Churchill Archives, KNNK 2/2/44, Policy Directorate Campaign Briefing, *Meet the challenge, make the change*, 30 May 1989

aired.’⁷⁰⁵ The eventual outcome of the Policy Review when it was finally completed was significant. The move away from established Labour nostrums as nationalisation (with the exception of the recently privatised utilities) and more contentious ideals such as unilateralism less than a decade since their adoption at conference had led to the breakaway of the Gang of Four and their supporters.

Critics of the Review were not restricted to the Hard Left of the Labour Party. One commentator suggested that the proposed changes in the Policy Review would have a detrimental effect on Labour’s support in Scotland. Ian Bell suggested that ‘all the policies which are thought to have contributed to Labour’s poor public image are to be abandoned,’ and that given ‘the despair and that a decade of impotence has induced, you can see Labour’s point.’⁷⁰⁶ For Bell this decision was taken with a view towards winning support in England, something which had not been an issue in Scotland and as such suggested that Labour’s current policies were the reason for their popularity there over the other parties and particularly the Scottish Nationalists. For Bell this was a dangerous proposition: ‘What in essence is the difference between Kinnock’s attitude and Thatcher’s? One takes it for granted that Scots will vote against her; the other that Scots will vote for him. Both prefer to cultivate the English majority, whatever Scotland thinks.’⁷⁰⁷

A.J. Davies criticises the Policy Review for timidity in not including any policy on electoral reform as championed by Charter 88, complaining that the surveys and opinion polling had made Labour “safe” to the point of dullness, not normally the characteristic one would associate with an organisation which, after all, was intended to challenge the status quo.’⁷⁰⁸ Hughes and Wintour, whilst acknowledging that ‘no other leading Labour figure could have so

⁷⁰⁵ Cambridge, Churchill College, Kinnock Papers, Churchill Archives, KNNK 2/2/44, Neil Stewart to Larry Whitty, ‘Re: Policy Review follow-through’, 6 June 1989, p.1

⁷⁰⁶ Ian Bell, ‘Kinnock puts the loyalty of Scotland to the test’, *The Observer*, 21 May 1989, p.10

⁷⁰⁷ Ian Bell, ‘Kinnock puts the loyalty of Scotland to the test’.

⁷⁰⁸ A.J. Davies, *To Build A New Jerusalem: The British Labour Party from Keir Hardie to Tony Blair* (Great Britain, Abacus, 1996), p.423; Hughes and Wintour, *Labour Rebuilt*, p.205

systematically successful in persuading the party to change', accused the review of lacking 'radical ambition.'⁷⁰⁹ Gerald R. Taylor was dismissive of the Policy Review and proffered that it had 'exposed the pragmatic heart of the Labour Party...and showed the Review to be little more than an exercise in winning votes' adding that 'Labour's very pragmatic history and philosophy which has stimulated the mistrust of the electorate.'⁷¹⁰ Radhika Desai dismissed the Review as far from becoming 'a Gaitskellite Party', Labour under Kinnock 'still refused to challenge Labourism by providing a clear doctrinal basis for the party,' adding that 'unlike the revisionism of the 1950s, Kinnock's Policy Review was not so much a restatement of socialism (however flawed), as a cynical image-building capitulation to a seemingly hegemonic Thatcherism'.⁷¹¹

The Policy Review may have been derided by some but the underlining purpose was achieved it moved Labour towards a more revisionist social democratic platform, neither "Thatcherite" or even an Owenite social democratic party⁷¹² and as Martin J. Smith observed it was Thatcherism which 'allowed Neil Kinnock the space to transform the party more successfully than any previous leader. Thatcherism was a reaction to a new set of circumstances in Britain and the world and the Policy Review is in some sense Labour's reaction to the same changes.'⁷¹³ Dianne Hayter observed that the Policy Review had called upon the help of members of Labour Solidarity in the process, with Gerald Kaufman helping on defence and George Robertson on Europe but also former Bennites in Margaret Beckett and Patricia Hewitt who were now firmly in the Kinnock camp,⁷¹⁴ underling just how Kinnock's coalition had expanded and gave some credence to Hattersley's dictum that the 'coalition of objectives'

⁷⁰⁹ Hughes and Wintour, *Labour Rebuilt*, p.205 p.204

⁷¹⁰ Gerald R. Taylor, *Labour's Renewal? The Policy Review and Beyond*, (London: Macmillan Press Ltd, 1997), p. 133

⁷¹¹ Radhika Desai, *Intellectuals and Socialism: "Social Democrats" and the Labour Party*, (London:, Lawrence & Wishart Ltd, 1994), p.185

⁷¹² Martin J. Smith, 'A return to revisionism?', in Martin J. Smith and Joanna Spear, *The Changing Labour Party* (London Routledge, 1992), p.28

⁷¹³ Martin J. Smith, 'A return to revisionism?'

⁷¹⁴ Dianne Hayter, *Fightback! Labour's Traditional Right in the 1970s and 1980s (Critical Labour Movement Studies)* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005), p.192

enables 'a united party to speak for a wide spectrum of national opinion'.⁷¹⁵ The Policy Review had moved Labour unequivocally towards a revisionist platform, strongly redolent of Croslandite thinking which underscored Hattersley's view of socialism. As Smith further observed 'the Policy Review and revisionism share a certain scepticism towards nationalization and detailed planning in the economy.'⁷¹⁶ Those on the revisionist wing of the party agreed, Giles Radice noting in his diary on 1 October 1989 at the Party Conference that 'we have abandoned unilateral nuclear disarmament, old-style nationalisation, high taxation and industrial relations practices based on expanding trade union immunities. Moderation and good sense a la John Smith have been the order of the day.'⁷¹⁷

Looking back on the Policy Review period, David Marquand was to be effusive in his praise of Kinnock's efforts with a description which was appropriate for the political change that not only the party had undertaken but Kinnock himself:

The Labour Party had, in short, become a normal European social democratic party, committed, as were its continental sister parties, to further European integration, continued membership of the Atlantic alliance and an open, market-orientated mixed economy, combining private enterprise and public power. Kinnock had turned out to be a more full-blooded – and successful – revisionist than Gaitskell had ever been.⁷¹⁸

Labour's transition to the social democratic revisionist party that it was to become was as a consequence of a hard-headed assessment that the party needed to change in order to be of any effective use. The defections of the SDP certainly focused minds yet the initial success of the Social Democrats was to be less effective or sustainable than their founders had hoped. Instead it would eventually be Labour who reached a revisionist consensus within the party,

⁷¹⁵ See Footnote 91.

⁷¹⁶ Martin J. Smith, 'A return to revisionism?', p.26

⁷¹⁷ Radice, *Diaries 1980-2001* p.199

⁷¹⁸ David Marquand, *The Progressive Dilemma: From Lloyd George to Blair (Second Edition)*, (London: Phoenix Giant, 1999), p.216

one which was prompted by the hard-headed realities of successive election defeats and the realisation that British society was changing. Electoral defeat was a much more effective corrective and by the time the Policy Review was initiated if wholehearted support was not forthcoming, understanding of a need to examine the party's long-standing policies was accepted. Labour was not adopting Thatcherism, nor was it accepting of the benefits of unfettered markets but it was gradually acknowledging that it could no longer be seen to be completely opposed to aspects of the new economy which had seen share ownership popular with a more aspirant working class. A mixed economy and a commitment to the public ownership of the utilities was to become Labour's proposition to an electorate increasingly receptive to the freedom to buy council house and buy a stake in companies such as British Telecom. This was very much a revisionist proposition, the freedom and liberty of the individual to share in the greater prosperity as a means of increasing equality.

Labour also ensured that it was committed to equality in the areas of gender, race and sexuality, a direct challenge to the restrictive qualities of the Thatcher Government and a continuation of Labour's re-asserted social liberalism. It was in the process of producing a platform which made it distinctive from both the Conservatives and the Liberals and SDP (in whichever form they were to take). Yet before the Policy Review was completed both Kinnock and Hattersley would face a challenge to their authority.

The Defeat of the Far Left: The Leadership Election of 1988

As the Policy Review was being assembled and put in to place, Kinnock and Hattersley were to face the challenge that had been expected from those on Hard Left but until early 1988 had kept their counsel. The instigation of the Policy Review had led some on the left to express their anger at Kinnock's decision to countenance the abandonment of long-standing policies which had been established since 1980. Opposition to the changes in the Policy Review were again being touted as a cause of a new schism between the left and right of Labour. A split

had already begun to occur within the Labour Coordinating Committee with those proposing a statement condemning the moves proposed by the Policy Review including Peter Hain and the newly elected MPs Ken Livingstone and George Galloway. Those opposed to the statement condemning included David Blunkett.⁷¹⁹

In his diary entry of 27 January 1988, Benn notes that having left a fractious meeting of the NEC that he thought that 'what came out of today's meeting was the detestation (led by Kinnock) of the left', and later that day the Campaign group discussed the possibility of a candidate forward to challenge for the party leadership.⁷²⁰ The idea was not universally supported within the Socialist Campaign group, with Clare Short, Gavin Strang, Paul Boateng, Diane Abbott amongst others who were either against or doubtful of a contest. Those in favour included Eric Heffer, Dennis Skinner and Jeremy Corbyn. The motion was passed to submit two documents 'Aims and Objectives' and 'Agenda for Labour' as a means of 'a concerted campaign for socialism...within the party', with a leadership election as part of that campaign.⁷²¹ Three days later, Benn issued a press release, denouncing 'the consistent failure of the leadership to give support to those – like the miners, the printers and others – who have been campaigning, outside parliament, to defend their jobs and living standards,' and 'the almost total subordination of the NEC and party staff to the Leader's office which now exercises its power in an increasingly authoritarian and intolerant manner often showing contempt for those who express dissent or even seek an open democratic debate on important issues.'⁷²²

⁷¹⁹ David Hencke, 'Labour braced for new left-right clash', *The Guardian*, August 19 1987, p. 3

⁷²⁰ Benn, *The End of an Era: Diaries 1980-90*, p.536

⁷²¹ Benn, *The End of an Era: Diaries 1980-90*, p.536

⁷²² Cambridge, Churchill College, Kinnock Papers, Churchill Archives, Press Release, 30 January 1988, Kinnock Papers, Churchill Archives, KNNK 2/1/115

Matters intensified when Kinnock wrote to *The Guardian* on 29 January 1988 deriding the possibility of a leadership contest and taking aim at Jeremy Corbyn for ‘a concerted campaign for socialism,’⁷²³ and asking

since socialism or anything like it will not come from anything but the Labour Party and since I presume that even the Campaign Group of MPs understand that a Labour Government is therefore necessary to promote that aim, can they produce the name of any Tory, Social Democrat or Liberal voter who says “I would be more inclined to vote Labour if only you had a leadership contest.”⁷²⁴

On 23 March 1988, Benn made his announcement that he would be challenging Neil Kinnock for the leadership. Benn’s decision prompted four MPs to leave the Campaign Group, Clare Short, Margaret Beckett, Joan Ruddock and Jo Richardson.⁷²⁵

Neil Kinnock himself had again been under pressure due to the fall in the party’s standing in the polls, albeit only narrowly – forty two percent as opposed to forty four for the Conservatives. As Westlake also observed Kinnock also found himself facing criticism from the right in the form of the Deputy General Secretary of the GMB David Warburton who had written in *Forward Labour* ‘the distance between the leadership and the rest of the Movement is rather sad, even surprising. At worst it is demoralising.’⁷²⁶

Yet Kinnock was to continue with his leadership defence, even when faced with the prospect of John Prescott challenging Roy Hattersley for the Deputy Leadership along with Eric Heffer. In an angry comment written against a note on an off-the-record briefing to three journalists

⁷²³ Cambridge, Churchill College, Kinnock Papers, Churchill Archives, Draft Press Release from Neil Kinnock to the Editor of *the Guardian*, 29 January 1988, Kinnock Papers, Churchill Archives, KNNK 2/1/115

⁷²⁴ Cambridge, Churchill College, Kinnock Papers, Churchill Archives, Draft Press Release from Neil Kinnock to the Editor of *the Guardian*, 29 January 1988, Kinnock Papers, Churchill Archives, KNNK 2/1/115

⁷²⁵ Benn, *The End of an Era: Diaries 1980-90*, p.543

⁷²⁶ Westlake, ‘Kinnock’, p.457

from the *Daily Express*, Kinnock had commented 'I consider the act of standing with the division and distraction it will cause is an act of sabotage against the party.'⁷²⁷

On 29 June 1988, Kinnock gave a speech to the Annual Conference of the National Union of Mineworkers denouncing those such as the union's president, Arthur Scargill, as failing to grasp the required changes to Labour policy in the face to three consecutive election defeats, attacking 'the left in their "wonderland" (who) were lagging behind Communist Russia, where "this very week in Moscow they are tearing up the orthodoxy of the command economy.'⁷²⁸

On the 2 October 1988, the leadership results were announced and Benn's defeat was total with Kinnock winning almost eighty-nine percent of the vote and Roy Hattersley being returned with almost sixty seven percent.⁷²⁹ Amongst the unions which had supported Kinnock was the National Union of Mineworkers.

The victory was for Kinnock a valediction of the moves undertaken with the Policy Review, as Keith Laybourn noted, 'Kinnock, and the Labour Party, were not going to driven off the rightward move towards social democracy.'⁷³⁰ Whilst Benn was philosophical on the morning after the defeat, a year afterwards his mood was different. Benn's assessment of the outcome of the Policy Review had been despondent, noting in September 1989 'the NEC has abandoned socialist aspirations and any idea transforming society; it has accepted the main principles not only of capitalism but of Thatcherism,' adding that 'however we dress it up, we are going to keep the bomb.' Benn then lamented that he:

⁷²⁷ Cambridge, Churchill College, Kinnock Papers, Churchill Archives, Press Release, Briefing note, undated

⁷²⁸ Philip Webster and Roland Rudd, 'Kinnock in fierce attack on left', *The Times*, 30 June 1988, p.1

⁷²⁹ Laybourn, *A Century of Labour*, p.142

⁷³⁰ Laybourn, *A Century of Labour*, p.142

didn't want to join another Party or set one up. I don't want the Labour Party to lose, but I want people to understand clearly what is really happening, otherwise they are going to waste their time, they'll be cynical, frustrated and so on.⁷³¹

It would be almost thirty years before there was another challenge from the far left of the party for any position of the leadership.

Conclusion

The defeats of both 1983 and 1987 were to be the catalysts for the radical re-positioning of Labour within the political landscape, 1987 more so than result of four years previously. Since Kinnock's election as party leader in 1983, Labour had striven to become relevant and appealing to an electorate which had significantly approved of the message presented by the Conservatives and the accompanying mandate that the voters had provided on two occasions. In 1987 the move to a more nuanced approach to the economy and a shift from the overtly socialist programme of 1983 may have seen Labour gain over two million votes yet it had again lost in a landslide defeat. The impact of these defeats was to lead to a Policy Review as an attempt to address how Labour could win back more voters including those it had lost previously and had not returned as well as those whom had never voted for them previously.

By the end of 1988, Kinnock had secured his position as leader. The left had been comprehensively defeated if not consigned to the margins as was to come in later years. By the end of the decade, Labour had secured its European flank to the extent that it was no longer one of the excoriating issues that threatened its unity. Austin Mitchell remarked that he thought that 'Kinnock actually did a great job in weaning the Labour Party from its more idiotic policies, it's more unsaleable policies including withdrawal from Europe, nuclear disarmament as well and presenting us as a moderate reformed party, which we were by 1987.'⁷³² In 1981,

⁷³¹ Benn, *The End of an Era: Diaries 1980-90*,

⁷³² Interview with Austin Mitchell, 4 November 2014

Giles Radice had contended that with winning the Deputy Leadership election, Denis Healey had saved the Labour Party. Looking back almost thirty years later, and despite whatever differences they may have had during their political partnership, Roy Hattersley was to use the same tribute for Neil Kinnock.⁷³³ The Labour Party had re-emerged at the end of a decade in which it had started in existential turmoil yet finished it with a statement of Aims and Values which now encapsulated what the party was for and for the very most part united behind them. Labour could point to a commitment to a less interventionist yet still guided economic approach allied to a commitment to personal freedoms and equality, a socially democratic economy and a socially liberal society.

Kinnock's and Labour's satisfaction at the move to a more centrist position was tempered by the continued realisation that power still seemed a distant prospect. Labour may have been making considerable progress in the opinion polls and the Policy Review was receiving positive attention. The battles over policy direction had seemingly been settled with the heavy defeat of Benn. Moreover, by the end of the decade and only eight years since its inception, the Alliance was now contending with the paroxysms of anxiety and anger which were resulting from the merger of the Liberals and the Social Democrats, a merger fiercely opposed by an isolated member of the original Gang of Four. Yet the heavy defeat in 1987 was only a year old and the Conservatives were still assured of unity and still securely in Government. For Labour it was still a case of work in progress and ultimately its greatest chance of return to Government was predicated on the Conservatives losing the confidence of the electorate. It would be another nine years and further introspection for such a chance to present itself.

⁷³³ Francis Beckett, 'Neil Kinnock – *The Man who saved Labour*', New Statesman, 25 September 2014, <https://www.newstatesman.com/politics/2014/09/neil-kinnock-man-who-saved-labour>, [accessed 5 November 2017]

Conclusion

The breakaway of the SDP represented a cathartic episode for the party as it allowed it to begin the process of re-discovering what its purpose actually was. It allowed the revisionists on the right who decided to remain, that they could continue as members of the party and in due course were to prove effective in re-establishing their influence within the party and stemming further defections. By the time of the 1983 General Elections the defections had stopped and new talent was emerging from the new intake of MPs, one of the few bright highlights from the carnage of the landslide that had taken place. From being demoralised and divided in the late 1970s, Labour's revisionists were to be much more vocal and confident by the end of the 1980s. The defections to the SDP may have been the catalyst for change within Labour but the transformation was undertaken despite, not because of, the SDP's creation. In the 1950s, Labour had debated what its purpose was and to train and find agreement on policies that appealed to the British electorate on the back of three successive election defeats, coming to accept that many of their working class supporters wanted more aspirational policies. Thatcherism's electoral success ensured that Labour assessed what its purpose was in the same way, the corrective shock of defeat galvanising the party in reaching for a consensus on what was required. It called together the broad church within which the congregation of those democratic socialists/social democrats who had remained sat alongside soft leftists and later a number of disillusioned far leftists such as Frank Dobson. They now coalesced to guide the party to a reformist, revisionist path.

The Crisis of Labour Revisionism

The formation of the Social Democratic Party and the subsequent defection of right-wing Labour MPs to it was a defining moment in Labour's history. It was an end and a beginning. It was a culmination of a long-running and festering dispute between certain sections of the party

which had lasted since the days of Hugh Gaitskell and Aneurin Bevin. The post-war period up to the 1960 had been a fertile time for the revisionist movement within the Labour Party, acting as a driving force of ideas and policies that attempted to move the movement away from the heavily statist Attlee era. Revisionist thinkers such as Douglas Jay and Anthony Crosland suggested a move away from nationalisation as a means of producing equality in society, with the latter producing the seminal post-war revisionist work in *The Future of Socialism*. Crosland's work would dovetail with another rising member of the Labour right in Roy Jenkins, with both men writing that alongside the pursuit of equality in the areas of industry and economy that a more socially liberal Britain should be achieved, calling for the abolishing of capital punishment, the removal of iniquitous legislation on matters such as homosexuality and the relaxation of Victorian laws on censorship and gambling. Such policies were anathema towards the left wing supporters of Aneurin Bevan, already in conflict with those who coalesced around the Labour leader Hugh Gaitskell and for many revisionists the best hope of ensuring their policies would see implementation.

Yet by the 1970s, revisionism was suffering from a crisis of confidence. Faith in the ideas of Crosland and indeed in the man himself had seen some on the revisionist right ally themselves more closely with Roy Jenkins as the keeper of the faith, particularly as both Crosland and Denis Healey expressed less than fulsome conviction towards Europe. This led to a schism within the ranks of Labour revisionists who had viewed Crosland as something of an icon, and the agnosticism towards Europe, which Crosland and Healey saw as being low down on the list of policy priorities, was a driving factor. The disaffected supporters found a ready replacement in the figure of an increasingly disenchanted Roy Jenkins and helped to foster a new grouping of Labour right wingers who were now referring to themselves as Social Democrats. That such disputes can occur due to an indelicate understanding of others' concerns, as was Crosland's case with MPs such as David Marquand and David Owen, is perhaps not surprising. The effects however, were seismic. Those who remained loyal to

Crosland, such as Roy Hattersley, had felt bitterness towards Jenkins saying he had become 'ideologically impatient with Roy Jenkins. I agreed, in virtually every detail, with his position on the Common Market...it was his views on domestic policy which had begun to worry me'.⁷³⁴ For Hattersley, an argument on comprehensive education, the policy that Crosland had helped to usher in during the 1967 Wilson Government, had ended 'with a sterile dispute about the rival merits of "more equality" and "less inequality". Sterile arguments are normally expressions of deeply held feelings which are too painful to express openly. Roy and I were drifting apart and I, at least, found the parting painful'.⁷³⁵ The period of Jenkins' resignation as Deputy Leader in 1972 was for Hattersley 'the moment the old Labour coalition began to collapse. I did not realise it at the time, but once the envelope landed on the Chief Whip's desk, the creation of a new Centre Party was inevitable'.⁷³⁶

Discontent with the Labourism of the Harold Wilson Governments of the 1960s had not just been the preserve of the left wing Tribunate ranks of Michael Foot and an increasingly influential far left coalescing around Tony Benn. Criticism had also come from the Labour right and particularly for Wilson's failure to deal with the matter of trade union legislation. In the following decade, a stagnating economy followed by the crises of the IMF bail-out and the Winter of Discontent during the James Callaghan administration had seen the abandonment of post-war Keynesianism and the enforced introduction of Monetarism. Crosland's stubborn refusal to countenance an update to the ideas expressed in *The Future of Socialism* was to see a more strident form of revisionism appear on the fringes of the Labour right, such as those in the Social Democratic Association. This was also questioned by other MPs such as David Marquand and John Mackintosh. Mackintosh claimed that had Crosland and Hugh Gaitskell were still alive 'they would have been the first to admit that their policies had not been fully successful. They would have struggled to rethink their case, to produce new programmes

⁷³⁴ Roy Hattersley, *Who Goes Home? – Scenes from a Political Life* (London: Little, Brown and Company, 1995), p.108

⁷³⁵ Hattersley, *Who Goes Home?*, pp.108-109

⁷³⁶ Hattersley, *Who Goes Home?*, pp.108-109

and to restore an element of idealism to Left-wing politics in Britain'.⁷³⁷ As Geoffrey Foote observed, with MPs such as Mackintosh who were becoming increasingly critical of the trade unions, 'the social democrat wing, as it was now called, was reaching a point where the revisionists could find no home in the Labour party'.⁷³⁸

Crosland's untimely death in 1977 and the self-removal from the Labour Government by Roy Jenkins to Brussels meant that for some on the right there was a lack of philosophical leadership. As Crewe and King observed

the fact was that, after dominating the Labour Party intellectually for at least forty years, the right had run out of ideas. They still had ideals. They still values. They still had preferences. But they no longer had a programme and a theory of how the world worked.⁷³⁹

After the 1979 election, Labour had to come to terms with the crushing defeat at the hands of a strident and populist Conservative Party led by Margaret Thatcher. The defeat, whilst not as excoriating in terms of loss of seats as the defeat of 1931 or 1959, was significant in what it represented. As with the Reagan Democrats in the United States, Labour lost support from an increasingly aspirational working class to the Conservatives. Some within Labour had spent the time in Government either under-estimating the determination of Thatcher and the forces that supported her, or presenting in lurid terminology what a Conservative Government would actually represent. Callaghan had noted with some prescience that there had been a 'sea-change' in the mood of the British public and that the certainties that his party had previously been able to call upon could no longer be taken for granted, namely the continual support from working class communities. How best to respond to this new phenomenon was something the

⁷³⁷ John Mackintosh, *Has Social Democracy failed in Britain?*, first published in *Political Quarterly*, July 1978, in Patrick Diamond, *New Labour's Old Roots: Revisionist Thinkers in Labour's History 1930-1997* (Exeter: Imprint Academic, 2004), p.149

⁷³⁸ Geoffrey Foote, *The Labour Party's Political Thought: A History* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1985), p.248

⁷³⁹ Ivor Crewe and Anthony King, *SDP: The Birth, Life, and Death of the Social Democratic Party* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), p.43

revisionists were not able to immediately contend with as Labour once plunged into civil war and the Labour right was increasingly under attack from the Bennite left.

The failure of the Labour right to remain united led to the eventual split and the formation of the Social Democrats. Roy Jenkins had spoken of Britain being ill-served by two parties operating on the extremes of politics and such sentiments were finding favour amongst some on the Labour right that had become increasingly convinced that the party was no longer representative of their views. The election of Michael Foot as leader over the favourite Denis Healey was the catalyst for the breakaway, as was the introduction of a unilateralist nuclear defence policy and a commitment to withdraw from the European Economic Community. With the announcement of the Council for Social Democracy, the Social Democratic Party was to eventually see twenty-eight Labour MPs defect. The Labour right was faced with an existential crisis on two fronts, temporarily incapable of leading a defence against those who had departed and the far left who wished to see them also go.

The immediate impact of the breakaway of the SDP from the Labour Party was a protracted period of opposition and the domination of the Conservative Party for the last two decades of the Twentieth Century. The 'sea-change' referred to by James Callaghan to the ending of the post-war consensus signalled the impending implementation of free market economics allied to an implied if not wholly executed Victorian puritanism. The Social Democrats were a natural consequence of the two main parties seemingly vacating the centre areas of the political spectrum. The Social Democrats offered to provide an invigorated dynamic to a centre now only occupied by the Liberals, a pseudo-revisionist body which held some similarities in belief to the older party, free of the influence of the trade unions and a seemingly more democratic movement than the Labour one it had wrenched itself from.

The SDP was to effectively reach its highest point as Denis Healey narrowly won the deputy leadership election against Tony Benn. Without this win, Labour may well have seen a

combination of MPs joining the new party or in the case of some such as Giles Radice leaving politics altogether. Healey's victory cemented the belief of those on the right that had remained that their decision had been correct. As noted in Chapter Three, for many on the right there was simply no question of defecting. Austin Mitchell considered the SDP, whilst causing damage to Labour initially, as being 'representative of flash in the pan politics', observing that it was usually as a reaction against the two-party dominated system.⁷⁴⁰ For Mitchell, Dick Taverne was the first instance of such a phenomenon at the Lincoln by-election in 1974 ('little man taking on the machine'⁷⁴¹), followed by the SDP, 'then Cleggmania and now as a fourth we have UKIP.'⁷⁴² For Mitchell, the defections were part of 'a self-correcting mechanism', with those who were leaving doing so due to a combination of 'ego, and ambition as well as ideology, they were just too impatient'.⁷⁴³

For Paul McHugh the impact of the SDP on the party was greatly significant in electoral terms:

the British left was appallingly damaged by the defection of the SDP and therefore greater empowerment of the Liberals when they found the Liberal Democrats, and it has taken us until now, in the mire of defeat, to see the Lib Dems really put back to where they were in the 1970s. I'm an old fashioned social democrat who would have much preferred the Labour Party to have carried on and win the 1983 General Election which I think it could have done if it had not split.⁷⁴⁴

Yet Labour's right-wing proved itself to be much more resilient than many of them realised at the time. Whilst the right had managed to caucus in groups such as Manifesto and Campaign for Labour Victory in the 1970s, the defections had seen those groups collapse. Despite this, and in the face of the SDP and the popularity of Tony Benn, revisionists such as Roy Hattersley

⁷⁴⁰ Interview with Austin Mitchell, 4 November 2014

⁷⁴¹ Interview with Austin Mitchell, 4 November 2014

⁷⁴² Interview with Austin Mitchell, 4 November 2014

⁷⁴³ Interview with Austin Mitchell, 4 November 2014

⁷⁴⁴ Interview with Paul McHugh, 16 January 2016

and Giles Radice were able to help form Labour Solidarity and involve those from the left such as Frank Field in their organisation and campaigning. With the support of the trade unions, the Labour right quietly re-asserted itself as a force within the party. Although the defections were a shock to the body politic, they ultimately acted as the reviving force that Labour's revisionist wing required. The humiliating defeat of the 1983 General Election weakened the far left by removing temporarily Tony Benn from Parliament, and it showed the limitations of the Social Democrats' electoral reach, with two of the 'Gang of Four' losing their seats and twenty-one others following suit. The SDP had been damaging to the Labour Party as they split the centre-left vote, but they had not effectively broken the stranglehold of British politics being dominated by the Conservatives and Labour. What the Social Democrats had also initiated was the slow rebuilding process that Labour was to go through to reach a revisionist consensus which followed another heavy electoral defeat.

Labour's Social Liberalism in the Thatcher Era

The election of Neil Kinnock and Roy Hattersley as his deputy was to herald a gradual process of rebuilding Labour after the humiliation of 1983. This process took place against the backdrop of the Miners' Strike of 1984-5 and the lengthy and protracted expulsions of Militant members from the party and in opposition to a Conservative Government with a huge majority which allowed it to act with even greater freedom than it had during the previous administration. In the face of such challenges, it would have been somewhat understandable if Labour had quietly dropped matters in the area of social affairs which it may have gauged to have been unpopular or unimportant by voters. As was seen during the Policy Review focus group results, Labour was perceived to be blighted by the 'Looney Left' epithet which suggested too much consideration on the rights of ethnic minorities and gay rights. Yet Labour not only maintained this commitment throughout the 1980s, a time when subtlety and compassion in such matters were in short supply, particularly in the print media, it was to eventually enshrine as a manifesto pledge to repeal Section 28 of the Local Government Act

of 1988. Labour could have jettisoned such a commitment but it would not only have found itself at odds with its membership but also its own traditions. Support for homosexual rights had been a cause within Labour for many years and in the 1960s it was seen as the culmination of a long called for pledge by revisionists such as Crosland and Jenkins but also by others within the party on the left as well. When Labour was presented with a puritanical codicil found within local Government legislation, it had no choice but to oppose it if it was to maintain its social liberal tradition. That Labour did was a testament to the adherence to its social liberal tradition when it would have been an easier option to ignore it.

The work that Labour undertook in the 1980s ensured that its social liberalism was taken forward into the era of New Labour. For all of the tough rhetoric on crime and a more socially moralising stance on issues on welfare and responsibility, the New Labour Government did adhere to a socially liberal programme which reversed some of the more retrograde policies that had been introduced during the Thatcher era, and it built on the work of previous Labour initiatives. The programme implemented by Tony Blair's New Labour Governments, which included the eventual repealing of Section 28, was in no small part due to the party continuing the progressive social liberalism that had survived when it so easily could have been jettisoned in the pursuit of power and populism. Policies which had been derided as the crackpot ideas of a few London councils by a hostile tabloid media were in due course to become the accepted norm and provided a link from the Foot era to the Blair years. Indeed, so accepted were the notions of gay equality that it was to be a Conservative-led Government that was to introduce same-sex marriage onto the statute books.

Yet unlike in 1992, when Labour clearly stated their intention to repeal Section 28, there was to be no mention of it in the 1997 manifesto. In 1994 there was acrimony directed to some Labour MPs who had abstained or voted against a bill proposed by the Conservative Edwina Currie equalising the age of consent, a measure which was supported by the now former

leader Neil Kinnock.⁷⁴⁵ Indeed, it was to be 2003 before the legislation was finally repealed and then by the mechanism of a free vote. As Simon Mackley observed, this prompted the Labour MP David Cairns to ruefully note that they 'would not dream of allowing a free vote on issues of race discrimination or gender discrimination.'⁷⁴⁶ So whilst in theory and in part practice it was to be an agent of social liberalism, in this regard the move to repeal was a tentative approach: perhaps this was due in part to maintaining the adherence to 'big tent' politics and thus not wishing to push too fast too soon.

This was not because it was simply wishing to keep occasional Conservative and Liberal Democrat voters on side, but rather Labour's own working class supporters who were less socially liberal. This linked Blair's leadership in some respect to Callaghan's in that it showed an adherence in a more gradualist approach to achieving stated aims in the belief that this would ensure longer term acceptance. The irony also is that New Labour was seen as a Government that had come in to power with socially liberal aims which it promptly met, yet it came to be identified with the illiberal. It was damaged by the association with the Iraq War, the pursuit of 90 day detention of suspects without charge and the attempted introduction of identity cards.

The legacy of the 1980s period was that it provided a social liberal basis for New Labour but one which was as problematic for the Blair Government as it was for the leadership of Neil Kinnock. In 1987, Kinnock was led to believe that supporting causes such as gay rights was a vote loser amongst the traditional working-class supporters. Thus in the 1990s and 2000s, was social liberalism ultimately to come at a cost of alienating the working classes who for so long supported the Labour Party? That was a fear in the 1980s based on polling of its support.

⁷⁴⁵ Patricia Wynn Davies, Colin Brown and Marianne Macdonald, 'Sexual equality for gays rejectED Angry protests greet MP's backing for consent at 18', *The Independent*, 22 February 1994, <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/sexual-equality-for-gays-rejected-angry-protests-greet-mps-backing-for-consent-at-18-1395642.html>, [accessed 9 October 2014]

⁷⁴⁶ Simon Mackley, 'The Long Road to Repeal: the Labour Party and Section 28', *New Histories*, July 5 2012, <http://newhistories.group.shef.ac.uk/wordpress/wordpress/the-long-road-to-repeal-the-labour-party-and-section-28/>, [accessed 26 October 2014]

And in the present era, has the pursuit of equality and fairness by Labour been one of the drivers for the popularity of the UK Independence Party in traditionally strong Labour areas, reflecting of the natural social conservatism of the working classes and a rejection of metropolitan thinking? The socially conservative philosophy as proffered by the adherents of Blue Labour has been suggested as a means of combating the rise of the populist right. Yet the party continued to find itself pressured to abandon a commitment to equality to counter the accusations that it is too hidebound to political correctness.

The problem with this proposition was, as Patrick Diamond and Michael Kenny wrote, that 'while its diagnosis of Labour's ills was powerful, Blue Labour's remedy may have offered the wrong kind of medicine. Many question the implications of romanticising the social relations of the past, against which women, ethnic minorities, gays and lesbians have rightly rebelled.'⁷⁴⁷ Moreover, the suggestion that Labour support is still wedded *en masse* to the ideals of social conservatism are not borne out by polling in 2012 which found same sex relationships as always or mostly wrong down to 29%, reflecting a rapid decline in opposition to the LGBT community mid-1990s onwards.⁷⁴⁸

Labour could certainly not take its core white working class support for granted, for as John Clarke noted, 'Labour without its traditional voters is the SDP – and look what happened to them. As a rootless elitist party they evaporated like a thimbleful of sherry in the hard Tuscany sun.'⁷⁴⁹ As they did in the 1960s and again in the 1980s, Labour had always been at its most effective when it challenged the accepted norms even when it has seemed politically dangerous to do so. Indeed it would be more severely damaging to them were they to water down such commitments to accommodate those who may never vote for them, losing new

⁷⁴⁷ Patrick Diamond and Michael Kenny, 'Labour's lost liberalism', *The Guardian*, Monday 12 March 2012, <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2012/mar/12/labour-lost-liberal-streak>, [accessed 9 October 2014]

⁷⁴⁸ British Social Attitudes 30, Key findings: How and why Britain's attitudes and values are changing, <http://www.bsa-30.natcen.ac.uk/read-thereport/personalrelationships/homosexuality.aspx>, [accessed 26 October 2014]

⁷⁴⁹ John Clarke, 'The Choice – support or dump Labour's traditional voters', *Labour List*, 9 August 2014, <https://labourlist.org/2014/08/the-choice-support-or-dump-labours-traditional-voters/>, [accessed 9 October 2014]

converts and long-standing supporters in the process. Frank Dobson proffered the assertion that the reason for voter mistrust is a direct result of parties saying one thing and then implementing another, that you may not win the vote but you may oddly win their trust, adding that 'Consensus is something that is pushed through by people with a real commitment to something and it is gradually accepted.'⁷⁵⁰

Labour Revisionism Renewed

It took a member of the soft left, and one from the Revisionist right, to help push through the changes that were to become the Policy Review. Neil Kinnock's pragmatic approach was augmented by Roy Hattersley's unabashed ideology and underpinned the debate that the party was required to have by 1987. It was significant that by the latter part of the 1980s, the faction of the party which was appearing as unsupportive to debate on policy was the one which had attacked the leaderships of Wilson and Callaghan for exactly the same reason. The Campaign Group led by Tony Benn was unsurprisingly opposed to the re-assertion of a new revisionism by Kinnock and Hattersley, but unfortunately for the former, three election defeats had convinced the wider movement of the need to address whatever changes were required. By the culmination of the Policy Review, Labour had agreed on a series of policies which were supported by the wider membership, the PLP and the unions. The protracted battles over Europe and nuclear weapons, the great shibboleths of the previous thirty years were seemingly resolved with the commitment to the European Community and a multilateral nuclear policy forged in a changing international environment. As noted in Chapter Five, David Marquand was warmly approving of the outcome of the Policy Review and its production was to see Labour very much a revisionist movement once more.⁷⁵¹ This was the 'coalition of

⁷⁵⁰ Frank Dobson, Interview with author, 4 November 2014

⁷⁵¹ See Footnote 126, Chapter Five, David Marquand, *The Progressive Dilemma: From Lloyd George to Blair (Second Edition)*, (London: Phoenix Giant, 1999), p.216

objectives' that Hattersley had spoken of in *Choose Freedom*, the combination of pragmatism and philosophy. The Policy Review was this understanding in practice.

Labour ended the 1980s hopeful that its forward march had not only been renewed but was now heading towards eventual victory. This was anchored by the crushing victory Neil Kinnock achieved over Tony Benn in the leadership contest of 1988. Seven years previously Benn had come agonisingly close to winning the Deputy Leadership, and his defeat to a man who had been amongst others on the soft left that had abstained rather than support his candidacy must have been all the more painful as a consequence.

The ultimate purpose of the Policy Review was to prepare the Labour Party for electoral success. That this was considered to be a cynical undertaking is somewhat confusing as the purpose of a political party is to attain power in to put its policies into place. If three defeats had not prompted the Policy Review then it would have been conceivable that Labour would have struggled to have maintained relevance. Whether the newly-formed Liberal Democrats could have capitalised on such an eventuality is uncertain seeing as the Alliance had failed to overtake Labour in the preceding period. What the Social Democrats and the Alliance had forced upon Labour was assistance in electoral defeat. Labour did not have to take philosophical direction from the SDP as it was able to consult with its own revisionist traditions. Under David Owen, the SDP had sought to be more aligned to the Conservative Party's economic policy despite Owen's protestations that the SDP remained a centre left party. Labour's Policy Review may have moved the party to the political centre but with a commitment to the public ownership of the utilities amongst its economic strategies. This helped to ensure it remained a distinctive voice.

The SDP failed to supplant Labour because it had not taken the right completely with them, leaving a left-wing rump. Instead the majority of centre-right and revisionist members remained within the party and, in due course, was to form an understanding with the soft left to reach a

new revisionist settlement. The SDP may have had philosophical pretensions to being more akin to the social democratic parties in continental Europe but in the end it failed due to Labour rediscovering revisionism after repeated electoral defeat. Ultimately the Social Democrats had imploded into bitter division, with David Owen leading the tiny remaining coterie of MPs who shared his opposition to the merger with the Liberals. After some unwieldy name changes, the new party settled on the Liberal Democrats under the leadership of the Liberal Paddy Ashdown. The new party struggled to break out of the teens in terms of polling and Labour seemingly began to benefit from its move to a more moderate position with the return of former members to the fold. Not everyone was so enamoured by this development: 'There were two SDP peers who applied to come back to the Labour Party accepted their membership...there was a real resentment about the people coming back...these people had deserted the Labour Party. They had been disloyal and had deserted us and in some way were never to be forgiven.'⁷⁵² Similar resentment was also felt by Paul McHugh:

Again, I'm not very tolerant of the SDP or Lib Dem argument now that "well you know you chaps wouldn't be where you are now if we hadn't pulled out." Indeed not, but we might have been in a better place, a Denis Healey Government through the 1980s wouldn't have been a bad thing for Britain, certainly better than Margaret Thatcher Government.⁷⁵³

From Policy Review to New Labour

Labour's defeat of April 1992 was devastating as the hope of being so close to victory had been high. Kinnock's infamous speech at Sheffield may have been seen as premature triumphalism but Labour had every reason to be confident after thirteen years of opposition. Labour's ideas had been well received, more so than they had been in 1987 and their operations had been further honed since the well-regarded campaign fought five years earlier.

⁷⁵² Interview with Joyce Gould, 10 December 2012

⁷⁵³ Interview with Paul McHugh, 16 January 2016

Taken on that basis only, all of the progress that had been made since the Policy Review which had been set up in order to make Labour electable had effectively come to nothing. Yet the Review had been otherwise successful in establishing a credible platform upon which Labour could build. The electoral task in overturning the majority held by the Conservatives was always a huge undertaking to consider, and in coming close to doing so reflects on the work that the Policy Review produced.

The defeat was an unprecedented failure for the Labour Party, a fourth consecutive reversal and one which had seen the Tories returned with the biggest share of the votes yet, albeit with a narrow majority of twenty one seats. The defeat was to see the resignation of Kinnock and Hattersley on the morning of the result. It was a bitter experience for Labour, yet the party did not resort to the civil war as took place in 1979. Instead there was a leadership election which saw the election of the centre-right shadow chancellor John Smith. Smith was the last remaining member of James Callaghan's Government and was a noted member of the Labour right, yet the election was not a straight battle between the right and left. Bryan Gould differed from Smith on the position of Europe but otherwise he was seen as one of the modernising members of the previous Kinnock team who eschewed the case for nationalisation, placing him more in the mould of Peter Shore over ten years previously. Smith however was an extremely popular choice amongst the membership, the unions and the PLP. The result when it was announced was total – Smith won the election with ninety-one percent of the vote.⁷⁵⁴

Tragedy was to strike Labour when John Smith died suddenly on 12 May 1994. The death of Smith removed from Labour an effective Parliamentarian and despite the oratorical skills of the previous two leaders before him, someone who had conducted his leadership with a forensic examination of the Government which had hit home. Presented as he may have been with good fortune such as the ERM debacle, Smith nonetheless had also shepherded Labour

⁷⁵⁴ 'Keith Laybourn, *A Century of Labour: A History of the Labour Party, 1900-2000* (New edition) (Great Britain, Sutton Publishing Ltd, 2001), p.146

through significant structural changes in the form of one member, one vote in the Electoral College, with MPs, trade unions and the CLPs given a third of the vote each. This act had as Keith Laybourn observed changed the party significantly: 'the electorate for the Labour leadership contests now numbered millions, not a few hundred or thousand activists in smoke-filled committee rooms.'⁷⁵⁵ Moreover, Smith, as the first Labour leader from the right since Callaghan, managed to ensure that the changes to conference voting was achieved by cultivating good relations with those on the left such as John Prescott. As with the hero of the Labour right Hugh Gaitskell, Smith's untimely death provided another lost leader, never to see the ambition of leading their party into Government. It was also to see the loss of a strong member of the revisionist right.

The leadership election of 1994 may not have provided Tony Blair with as emphatic a victory as the one enjoyed by John Smith, but his election nonetheless was significant as it was undertaken under the new system of one member, one vote. Blair gained 198 votes of the PLP compared with 65 for Beckett and 64 for Prescott. In the CLPs Blair won 100,000 votes, almost sixty thousand more than his nearest rival Prescott and amongst affiliates, Blair won almost double that of the man who finished second. With Blair's election came the stated aim of governing from a position that was neither in the left or right, 'the third way' as espoused by the 'New Democrats' associated with President Bill Clinton in the United States.⁷⁵⁶ This was another year zero as far as the left were concerned as Blair's leadership ushered in the era of New Labour. Keith Laybourn observed that it was Blair who was 'the modernizer who has not had to look to the past,' that unlike previous leaders he was not required 'to assimilate the past culture of Labour, steeped in the trade union traditions and collectivism of the past.'⁷⁵⁷ On 29 April 1995, Blair's efforts to achieve what Gaitskell could not - the removal of Clause IV from the party constitution committing it to nationalisation - was approved by the large majority of

⁷⁵⁵ Laybourn, 'A Century of Labour', p.147

⁷⁵⁶ David Marquand, *The Progressive Dilemma*, p.234

⁷⁵⁷ Laybourn, *A Century of Labour*, p.150

the membership: ninety percent of the CLP voted in favour, as did almost fifty seven percent of the trade union vote.⁷⁵⁸

If the SDP's influence on Labour during the 1980s was electoral, what was it in regards to the New Labour project which was determined to present itself as above factionalism? There is the argument, such as that put forward by David Marquand, that New Labour was a different phenomenon entirely from the SDP, one that 'abandoned not only socialism but social democracy – in any sense that paladins of the social-democratic tradition such as Bevin, Gaitskell or Crosland would have used the term,'⁷⁵⁹ although Marquand refutes charges of New Labour being Thatcherite: 'Underpinning the individualistic, mobile, competitive society is a highly interventionist, indeed dirigiste workforce state, which would have warmed the cockles of Beatrice Webb's heart.'⁷⁶⁰ Keith Laybourn contended that "New Labour" has now rejected the old Keynesian social democracy of the "Old", which had suggested that the state could intervene to promote growth and thus ensure economic growth and employment.'⁷⁶¹ This is at odds with New Labour supporters such as Giles Radice who stated that Tony Blair's 'rethinking (of) the party's strategy in the light of circumstances was pure revisionism,' and that it followed '...the Croslandite argument for defining socialism in terms of greater equality rather than of nationalisation.'⁷⁶²

For the activist Paul McHugh, New Labour was simply a different manifestation of the party that was essentially as Labourist as Harold Wilson's or James Callaghan's administrations:

The most significant thing about New Labour was its determination to avoid being defeated, it was anything for winning really and I don't think the SDP's departure was an influence on that. The SDP departure made Labour a losing party for thirteen years,

⁷⁵⁸ Laybourn, *A Century of Labour*, p.151

⁷⁵⁹ Marquand, *The Progressive Dilemma*, p.233

⁷⁶⁰ Marquand, *The Progressive Dilemma*, p.235

⁷⁶¹ Laybourn, *A Century of Labour*, p.152

⁷⁶² Giles Radice, *Friends and Rivals: Crosland, Jenkins and Healey* (London: Little Brown, 2002), p.335

so that's true but in terms of intellectual formation and policy, no. What New Labour was, was a determination not to put a foot out of place and to ensure victory almost at all costs and you know the Labour Party today is trying to understand where it's going in reaction to that.⁷⁶³

New Labour as a radical reforming force became beached on the concept that any acceptance of ideas adopted by previous administrations would be an admission of failure and the pursuit of measures such as ID cards and the detention of prisoners sat uneasily with revisionism's social liberal heritage. Martin Pugh contends that New Labour and Blair's ideology in particular was an extension of Thatcherism coupled with a social moralism which was underscored by Blair's emphasis on being tough on crime.⁷⁶⁴ It could also place Blair alongside David Owen's tough paternalism, an eschewing of 'soggy liberalism' which Owen found anathema.⁷⁶⁵ A strong emphasis on social moralism in that all crime was wrong did not necessarily set Blair apart from previous Labour leaders, particularly not in the case of James Callaghan.

New Labour was a revisionist movement, but perhaps it would not be one that Crosland would readily recognise nor accept beyond the pro-Europeanism and the pursuit of eradicating inequality through redistribution. New Labour worked when it operated as a Labourite administration, pursuing policies that crossed both socialist and social democratic areas. Independence of the Bank of England on the first day of the Blair Government was a radical step which was actually formulated by Ed Balls in his capacity as Gordon Brown's chief economic adviser. The implementing of a one-off 'Windfall Tax' on privatised utility companies in order to fund the creation of Sure Start Centres was both populist and Croslandite in turn – taxation on large corporations in order to help deal with social inequalities. The problem for the administrations for both Blair and Brown's administrations was that its reluctance to

⁷⁶³ Interview with Paul McHugh, 16 January 2016

⁷⁶⁴ Martin Pugh, *Speak for Britain! A New History of the Labour Party* (London: Vintage, 2011), pp.393-393

⁷⁶⁵ Kenneth Harris, *David Owen Personally Speaking to Kenneth Harris* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1987), quoted in Marquand, *The Progressive Dilemma*, p.203

consider aspects of the revisionist traditions meant that it was ignoring a part of its traditions which may have ultimately assisted them in their policy making.

The Legacy of the Breakaway

The defections of those who left Labour in order to form the SDP were motivated by a sense of no longer believing that Labour was the mechanism by which social change could be promoted. The defections were also motivated by ideology, with those departing being as doctrinaire as those on the left who they were opposed to. With the benefit of considerable hindsight, it can be argued that the defections in 1981 were an aberration and that the threat to moderate revisionism within the party was never truly at risk. In the context of Labour Party history, the defections of the SDP were the beginning of a revisionist corrective process in which the arguments that began in the 1950s, and which reached their zenith in the early 1980s, were settled by the process of blood-letting which began with the Gang of Four and the expulsion of Militant. Under Neil Kinnock and then John Smith, the Labour Party began the protracted move to the political centre. And with the election of Tony Blair in 1994 it was suggested by those such as David Owen that the ultimate victory of the revisionists was complete, particularly with the return of some former SDP members. Yet by the second decade of the twenty-first century, the left of the Labour Party enacted a resurgence that would not have been thought possible or likely twenty years before.

Following the General Election defeat in May 2010, the victory of Ed Miliband as Labour leader on 25 September was to see an attempt to return to a more social democratic ethos, a move which was welcomed by Roy Hattersley. Miliband's shadow cabinet also saw tensions between his 'more radical instincts' and those of his shadow chancellor, Ed Balls, a man who proclaimed himself an unashamed Keynesian.⁷⁶⁶ Further criticism came from what was seen

⁷⁶⁶ George Eaton, 'Keynes's bulldog: a profile of Ed Balls, Labour's most polarising politician', *New Statesman*, 11 March 2015, <http://www.newstatesman.com/politics/2015/03/keyness-bulldog-profile-ed-balls-labours-most-polarising-politician>, [accessed 3 September 2017]

as an uncertainty as to what Miliband's leadership meant in terms of policy. Initially he embraced elements of the 'Blue Labour' philosophy as espoused by Jon Cruddas and Maurice Glasman, going so far as to provide the preface to the ebook *The Labour tradition and the politics of paradox*. The problem was that Miliband's tenure was to see criticisms over what exactly his leadership represented. Was it 'Blue Labour' or was it a Social Democratic movement, as hoped by Roy Hattersley in 2011:

Blue Labour has – in its extreme advocacy of localism – discounted the importance of ending the postcode lottery in health and social care and justified the acceptance of a sometime inadequate level of provision as the inevitable result of moving power away from central Government. In contrast, we believe that the central state has a crucial part to play in the creation of a better (as distinct from the 'big') society and that its defence is essential to the construction to Labour's policy.⁷⁶⁷

The Labour Party under Ed Miliband struggled to reach what its policy programme was to be, and it faced criticism from both former Blair-era ministers and also the left of the party. But in 2011 Miliband found himself receiving praise from one of the original members of the 'Gang of Four', Lord David Owen. Whilst discounting the possibility of returning to the Labour Party, Owen (who sat in the Lords as an Independent Social Democrat) donated money to Labour's campaign funds in March 2014.⁷⁶⁸ The possibility of Owen's return was guardedly welcomed by some commentators:

Labour is a social democratic party — or at least that is where it is returning under Ed Miliband, departing from the neoliberalism of the New Labour years — is it not the right place for social democrats to be? It is hard to argue that it isn't. Left Futures' policy

⁷⁶⁷ Roy Hattersley and Kevin Hickson, 'In Praise of Social Democracy', *The Political Quarterly*, Vol. 83, No. 1 (October–December 2011), pp.7-8

⁷⁶⁸ George Eaton, 'David Owen joins Miliband's big tent with donation to Labour of more than £7,500', *New Statesman*, 3 March 2014, <http://www.newstatesman.com/politics/2014/03/david-owen-joins-milibands-big-tent-donation-labour-more-%C2%A37500>, [accessed 23 June 2017]

prescriptions may well be rather different from David Owen's (as they are from David Miliband's) but that does not mean that we cannot co-exist in the same party. It is surely right that Labour is a "broad church", provided that we are prepared to work together, respect our differences and accept democratic decisions.⁷⁶⁹

What was to be Ed Miliband's most significant legacy – the pushing forward proposals for far reaching changes to the election processes within Labour – were adopted by the party. On 1 March 2014 at a special party conference, Labour voted to accept Miliband's proposal to eighty-six percent to fourteen percent to introduce a full version of one member, one vote for all members of the movement. The vote was accepted and grudgingly backed by the three main unions in Unite, Unison and the GMB, with Paul Kenny of the latter saying that further reforms would be resisted.⁷⁷⁰ In undertaking this, Miliband had achieved what members of the SDP had attempted as members of Labour some thirty-four years earlier.

The defeat of 2015 was a devastating result for a Labour Party that had at least hoped to be the largest party in Parliament. The result was the election of a long-time supporter of Tony Benn in Jeremy Corbyn. Corbyn's standing within the party was not particularly high, his profile nationally even less so. Outside of the Benn Diaries, Corbyn's name rarely appears in many histories of the Labour Party. Scraping on to the leadership ballot after being effectively lent the required MPs votes demonstrated how far the left, in particular the Bennite left with which Corbyn was associated, had fallen. In 2007 Corbyn's fellow Campaign MP John McDonnell had failed to even get close to gaining the nominations to challenge Gordon Brown for the leadership. In 2010 Diane Abbott managed to get onto the ballot but was defeated in the first round of voting. Outside of Michael Meacher in the Blair Government, no Campaign MPs had cabinet experience. For all of his relative inexperience, Corbyn's leadership bid was seen as

⁷⁶⁹ 'David Owen – Would Labour want him back?', *Left Futures*, <http://www.leftfutures.org/2011/01/david-owen-would-labour-want-him-back/> [accessed 23rd June 2017]

⁷⁷⁰ Andrew Sparrow, 'Miliband wins vote on Labour party reforms with overwhelming majority', *The Guardian*, 1 March 2014, <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/blog/2014/mar/01/labour-votes-on-membershipunion-reforms-at-special-conference-politics-live-blog>, [accessed 23 June 2017]

offering the party a genuine debate which for a time had seemed to be too narrow in its focus. It was an opportunity which was to see Corbyn elected resoundingly, signifying a considerable shift to the left by the party membership and affiliates.

What are the prospects for revisionism within Labour in an era where populist and left-wing policies such as nationalisation of the railways and the scrapping of tuition fees are part of the manifesto? If Labour is to exist as the broad church as suggested by Tony Benn then it has to be accommodating to all factions and all strands of thought, be it of the more radical left, the soft left and the Social Democratic right. The problem is that for many in the party membership, revisionism is a reference to the past, to the era of Blair and Iraq and of electoral defeat in 2015, even though some revisionists such as Roy Hattersley had issues with the New Labour period. Just as in 1979, the left see the cause of all of Labour's travails as being caused by failures in government of the right, whilst the right think that the policies and solutions proffered by the left amount to nationalisation and control of the party apparatus. What chance is there of a rapprochement as the one reached in the 1980s between the Labour factions? Whilst the prospect for a revisionist revival in the near future must have seemed remote in 1979, what is the future of socialism in the Labour Party from a present day perspective? If Labour revisionism is to re-emerge and flourish and to provide a critical and progressive contribution to policy then it is perhaps fitting to conclude with the assessment of Tony Crosland by Giles Radice:

Even if many of Crosland's assumptions and policy prescriptions are no longer valid, his way of looking at things, especially the distinction between ends and means and his insistence that social democracy must be constantly revised, continues to be of relevance in the twenty-first century.⁷⁷¹

⁷⁷¹ Giles Radice, *Friends and Rivals: Crosland, Jenkins and Healey* (London: Little Brown, 2002), p.269

For all of its great achievements and advances, as a vehicle for social change Labour has often found itself parked in a cul-de-sac arguing with itself about its future direction, and intensely examining why it was out of power. At these points, particularly in the 1980s, existential questions had been raised as to the efficacy and purpose of the Labour Party – what was it for and who did it represent? In 1981, Labour was to see a schism which resulted in the formation of the Social Democratic Party and a very real possibility that it would be overtaken as the main centre left party in British politics. By the end of the 1980s it seemed as though the great battles between the revisionist right and the left of the Labour Party had been resolved in favour of the former. For the Labour right in the present day, it would appear that the struggle continues.

Epilogue

The purpose of this thesis was to examine the history of the breakaway of the Social Democratic Party some thirty years after the events took place. It was undertaken in order to detail how the revisionists eventually reasserted their influence within the Labour Party in the latter part of the 1980s. The period required a new perspective on the events of the late 1970s and 1980s by means of interviews with some of the witnesses and in some cases main actors of the period as well as the utilisation of relevant archive material. The thesis can be placed amongst those texts that record a party struggling to establish its identity against a backdrop of bitter internal division, and the Labour right in particular attempting to regain what their purpose was in the face of advances by the far left and an ideologically strident Conservative Government.

The Labour Party's reaction to the breakaway and the impact that the Social Democrats formation had on Labour's left and right wings was to see the gradual re-emergence of a modified revisionism. Not only did Labour have to come to terms with being out of power, having been soundly beaten by a new, ideologically aggressive Conservative Party, but it also had to deal with some of its leading figures leaving to establish a new party that took its name from a core part of Labour's heritage and tradition. The discontent of the Social Democrats was not purely towards the leftward movement of the Labour party but as a result of their experience during the period of the Wilson and Callaghan governments which they had attacked for being statist or corporatist in nature. The Labour governments of the 1960s and 1970s had failed to satisfy the emerging New Left or an increasingly embittered Social Democratic right. For the Social Democrats the issues of control, of party leadership and the direction of the party, was such that those who left felt the position was irretrievable.

This context means that the SDP's formation was an even more important turning point in British political history. The emergence of the SDP did more than simply split the left; it also solidified the new consensus politics that the New Right's victory ushered in after 1979. The SDP's acceptance of certain aspects of Thatcherism such as monetarism gave this new philosophy a greater credibility which allowed it to embed itself into British politics more deeply and more quickly. This then meant that Labour was forced to define itself as much by its reaction to the new politics as by its own traditions and ideals. This was to lead to the road to the Policy Review with the long-term impact being the emergence of New Labour in the 1990s. This places the SDP's formation within the wider history of reformism, revisionism and change in the Labour Party.

Appendix One

Interview with John Battye, Steve Garry and Jeremy Sutcliffe, 18 November 2015

PB So my first question is to ask for your recollections of the mood within the Party just before and after the 1979 General Election?

JS Well, I don't particularly think that the rise of the SDP and the parting of the SDP caused us any particular worries. I do know that in the build up to the 83 it was the only count where I've ever seen Michael (Meacher) worried and as much as anything else it had followed a boundary change. So these two Failsworth wards had just come in and it was obvious canvassing that it was a difference between people who knew and people who didn't and the majority was down to about 1500, it was about the lowest we ever had but I don't think we saw them as anything like a threat because essentially no major figure in the local Labour Party had gone over. The people we associated with it one just checking with John now had been a Labour councillor right at the beginning of the new authority but the other one who went that way was Frank Platt. They were part of a clique that had sort of lost its way at the end of the County Borough, lost control of the Labour Group towards the end of the County Borough and I'm fairly sure Freddy Baxter was actually the only one....

JB Freddy Baxter, Ex-leader of the County Borough about 3 years before the County Borough was wound up, he was ousted by the Labour Group and one of the reasons he was ousted was a bit funny really because they had three Fridays running Granada had a half hour question and answer session live from the town hall. And Fred Baxter was the leader of the Labour group and Geoffrey Webb was the leader of the Tory group, Tony Adler was the single Liberal on the Council but Fred Baxter turned up in front of an invited audience in a white tuxedo jacket and a blue bow tie and you couldn't

tell from the questions he was answering that there was any difference between him and Geoffrey Webb. So he was ousted after that but he did win a seat in the '73 election, which was the new 60 seat metropolitan authority and we think he won there was a double ward where there was six people elected for a period of 2,3 or 5 years and I think he just did one term but he was just a fella who was keen on standing orders and there was a young liberal actually who joined the Labour Party eventually who was called Peter Jepson and he had a bright red shirt on and Baxter jumped up and said to the Mayor who was Nelly Brierley 'Madam Mayor, would you rule that councillor Jepson is inappropriately dressed'. So Nelly said 'Councillor Baxter, I cannot determine the colour of shirts which members choose to wear'.

JS Jepson ended up as a left-wing Labour parliamentary candidate unsuccessful and in London. He was a total pillock in Oldham.

JB But our problem was Militant infiltrating equally started with a war called Waterhead where it was 60 odd people meeting and 30 on one side and 31 on the other and at the end they were throwing chairs at each other and the ward got suspended, and it was rough and that was probably the roughest one, I know they had it rough in St. Helens and Liverpool...but it may be a reason why people joined the SDP we didn't have any labour councillors left the group. Fred Baxter, who I just mentioned stood a few years later for the SDP, he was the hospital secretary as well but he didn't win, but we did have one or two SDP councillors who were ex-Labour party members. One of them was John Anchor.

JS John Dillon was one of the few who got elected as SDP. Anchor was always elected as Liberal.

SG They all became Liberal Democrats when they merged in the Eighties.

JB I think they were SDP but we didn't have an SDP group on the Council. They were ex-SDP who became Liberal Democrats.

JS Well, I checked, I was recently the agent for Crompton (Ward) and so I was checking back just to see when the Liberals started to win it and that's when I turned up that John Dillon was SDP first of all.

JB Did he get in?

JS Yeah. That's how it started.

JB They had an agreement with the SDP in this ward and the Liberals in that ward...

PB So the Alliance was at work at local level?

JB Oh yes.

JS I think John's right, we were looking over our shoulder at the Trots...

SG Was it just Waterhead?

JS No, it spread into 'cause...David had trouble in St James (Ward)

JB Michael Wood, who is now the Labour MP for Batley and Spen (note: Mike Wood was MP for Batley and Spen until 2015 when he stood down and was replaced by Jo Cox. Wood is a member of the Socialist Campaign Group), I think he was one of them, who

give a lot of grief out to people. It spread, and it spread into Saddleworth as well, funnily enough.

JS That was the Oldham East side. But in those days in both constituencies we were very, very casual on people joining, 'pay your money, here's your card'. And at the time I was Secretary for Oldham West and I sensed what was happening in Oldham East and there was a slight rumour that they were trying to get council houses in Hollinwood, which was West. Well they didn't, but it was a rumour. So being a bureaucrat I tightened up on the rules and insisted that any new members goes through the Constituency, so we got a bit more control on it. Which threw Ralph Semple. Ralph was one of the really old guard, the former leader of Chadderton (Urban District Council) and reckoned he had some clout as the new Borough came round. And he appointed a girl called Cath Potter as Secretary. And I said 'sorry Ralph, she can't be Secretary, she isn't a member'.

'But, but, but...'

'Those are the rules',

'We haven't done that?'

'We're doing it that way now. Come to the AGM we can approve her membership and we become Secretary after that'. So that's how we did it and she got in as Secretary. Nine months later Ralph realises she's a trouble-maker.

'She's moved into Coldhurst, can I sack her?'

'Sorry, Ralph, she's your Secretary until next Annual meeting.'

I had the problem and in 1983 it was the change over to the new constituency and I was the CLP Secretary and it was Jim Berry picked up that there would be a hit by Militant on me in the normally quiet Werneth ward meeting ...I survived it but the pressure was there from the Trots but it was never as apparent or problematical in Oldham West as it that fairly well-organised group was in Oldham East and particularly Waterhead.

JB At the '79 election the Labour Party did extremely well in Oldham, we were miles behind, we had to gain 14 seats to take control of the council, there were only 20 seats we won 13 gains and 4 holds. There were only three seats we didn't win, I was one of the three but I got an enormous vote in Saddleworth because we were on a General Election turnout. But '83 was far more difficult

SG '83 was awful...going be a bit like 2020...

JB We are going through déjà vu as far as I'm concerned. You get the feel the stuffing has been knocked out of you, really. You go along with a group people you've known for 30, 40 or 50 years and you work and you go to meetings and you don't fall out and you have a pint and that's it. But now we've got a leadership who have been elected by people who are not activists. The Labour Party is nothing if it hasn't got a groundswell of people who will come out and knock on doors, go to events and raise money, we can't write a cheque like the Tory Party. You need people who are going to deliver.

JB In Manchester they had a lad called John Nicolson who made Hatton in Liverpool look like he was the most normal, middle of the road sort of bloke. He was a nasty piece of work, he organised the Police Monitoring Committee, he took over the Community Health Council. I don't know what happened to him but he was a Socialist Worker. we had that in the social workers, the Socialist Workers had a fairly strong presence among some of the staff, particularly the social workers and we knew were they met up we had a plant in there having a pint see what they were doing. They were undermining us a lot.

JS Again I'm thinking more about the hard left were far more of a problem than the SDP. My problem with was the NUT see. I did three years, 71-74 with the County Borough I was politically excluded because I worked for the new authority, I accepted the invitation to be Secretary to the NUT, one of the worst bloody decisions in my life in many ways but that was with rise of what they called the Rank and File (Mobilising Committee) which was again a Trot front. And I tried to living with them but couldn't and they'd have their meetings on Thursday nights and I get a phone call with my instructions on Thursday night which I never followed but in terms of that similar pressure 1980 in the three years I was Secretary, vice-President and President it was a constant battle to get moderate members in to get rid of ridiculous resolutions.

JB The Poll Tax was a real issue and it allowed the Socialist Worker Party and Anarchists to latch onto that and the real tragedy is like it is now that working tax credits and child credits that is the issue that's hitting people. That's what we're in the bloody Labour Party for social justice, not to campaign for and against certain personalities. The Labour Party is bigger than personalities. That's why we're still in it. Just.

PB Those associated with Militant, they were quite well-ingrained in the 1970s, did they ever get involved with canvassing or did they...

JS My rent-a-Trot in Werneth, I never saw him on the doorstep.

JB There's another one called Alan Creagh up in Shaw, his wife Margaret was Creagh and she was named in the book 'Militant'. He's still in the party, he never comes, he just go to meetings...

JS He'd do one round.

To be fair to what happened with Corbyn it wasn't just the new people, if we hadn't had any new members he'd have still have been leader, because forty eight percent of the old pre-members voted for him on the first ballot so he'd gone through on the second ballot if they had been the only people having a vote. So while we sat back thinking that Corbyn's going to win because of the new people, he didn't. The other thing, it's bizarre isn't it, to be selected as a local authority candidate you got have people there who have had six months membership, to elect the bloody leader of the party you have to be a six hours membership and you're in. It's ridiculous, why didn't they apply the same bloody rule?

JB Basically John they didn't think it through. When that Special Conference was held nobody expected a leadership contest for after five years as Ed was going to win the election. It wasn't thought through it wasn't thought through.

PB Speaking of leadership elections, how was the election of Michael Foot in 1980 greeted in the CLPs, was he a popular choice?

JB No. My personal opinion I don't think he wasn't a popular choice, there wasn't a wave of new members. MPs voted for Foot and wanted an excuse to get out. Bill Rodgers was one. Shirley was another, David Owen. They reckon there were seven who nominated...like people who nominated for Corbyn then voted for whoever.

JS Just thinking back to the SDP, I think that one of the things that it did locally was that because it was new and because it was fresh and it related to the freshness to how people saw Corbyn there was a freshness. It did attract people who hadn't been politicised before. There was a candidate...who stood in the Parish elections in Saddleworth and he got nowhere and never did it again, stood in a multi-member seat and he was broken because he hadn't got anywhere.

JB They don't like traitors. They don't like turncoats,

JS They were never Labour.

JB No, but people people thought the SDP were turncoats.

PB Was that the strong sense amongst activists, that the SDP were traitors?

JB The only reason the Gang of Four was set up was because of Shirley Williams. If they couldn't have got Shirley Williams on board the SDP would have collapsed, she was the face of the SDP which was acceptable. Not like 'Woy', no one had heard of Rodgers and Owen was up his own backside.

JS The fate of the SDP and the Gang of Four is the warning light that you won't see that again. I don't think it would happen.

PB Reading the Labour Solidarity papers today,

JB Hattersley's?

PB Yes, coming from the right of the party the attack against the SDP is as strong as it is against Militant, a middle class movement letting down working-class voters. And when they lost the Darlington by-election in 1982, saying that was proof that the SDP would never make any headway in the North. Do you think the SDP never had a chance as they were viewed as turncoats and as elite?

JS Possibly. Roy's lisp didn't help. But the first past post system showed that to split the left-wing vote was wrong and fatal.

PB With Denis Healey having to stand as Deputy Leader against Tony Benn, what was the feeling within the local parties for that particular battle, by this point CLPs had much more say in because of the Electoral College, was there more support for Healey?

JB Yeah, I think people thought felt Healey had been badly let down by people who had voted for Foot even though they were Healey supporters, 'we can't let Denis go through that again.' He was a political giant, no doubt about it. You know when he denied he said that Labour would squeeze the Tories until the pips squeaked' I'm convinced he said it at the 73 Conference in Blackpool. I'm sure he did, we were on our feet cheering! I came home, 'You should have heard Denis, he said he would squeeze them until the pips squeaked!'

JS In Oldham West we were more Bennite because of Michael (Meacher).

PB Michael stood didn't he?

JB He stood against Hattersley (for the Deputy Leadership in 1983).

PB On the build up to 1983 with Foot as Leader and Healey as Deputy Leader, was it difficult sell here in Oldham to canvas for Labour?

JS Yes, the majority went down to the lowest it had ever been (in Oldham West).

JB In Saddleworth bit Saddleworth, Shaw and Littleborough, oh it was horrible. We got about 6000 votes, Geoffrey (Dickens, the sitting Conservative MP for Littleborough and Saddleworth in 1983) got 25,000.

PB Was the Falklands factor an issue?

JB Oh yeah.

SG Yeah, definitely.

JB Foot and Falklands. I would also add, Steve this is what brought you into Oldham West it was this business we just had a boundary change, Charles Morris (MP for Manchester Openshaw which Failsworth previously fell into before the seat was abolished) and he was fairly well regarded but lost his seat after a very tight reselection battle and it was selling a new face in Michael. I don't think we particularly had the weight. Barry Wright was doing bugger all in Hollinwood which was one of our banker wards, and I had my really good busy team in Werneth and I said we were ready to help out and told if we stepped in Hollinwood they would do nothing on the day. There

was a little bit of inner awkwardness. The Committee room of mine which had been in Werneth but just gone back into Hollinwood after boundary changes went and my team there knocked up and canvassed on their own initiative. Because Barry Wright had been associated with Charlie. There was a little bit of inner awkwardness.

SG I think in Failsworth at the time with knocking on doors and what have you there was resentment towards Michael. He was viewed as an extreme real left-winger. I remember one night every door that we knocked on they were having a go about Foot, he'd just been on the telly about something, 'sorry lad, I'm not voting for Michael Foot, lad' it was all about Michael Foot.

PB Would you say that particularly in Oldham itself that its more soft left, centre but rather traditional, Labourist?

JB Well in Oldham West about 60 odd percent of the membership now is Asian so you can't call them soft left, it's more tribal, its family.

PB You just mentioned the Asian community, which has been there for fifty odd years, but as well as those members would you say that the Oldham constituencies they are more socially conservative than other Labour constituencies?

JB Yeah, we don't have a great number of young members, we don't have as student population like in the centre of Manchester. We have an old Labour membership in Oldham in more ways than one. I've been a member of Labour for fifty-five years. We welcome young members but they don't stay very long.

- PB I mentioned before about Labour Solidarity do you remember any events being set up in support?
- JS Hattersley did a social do for Solidarity organised by Barry Wright.
- JB For all his left-wing views, Michael never pressed his views onto the membership.
- JS When (John) Prescott won the Deputy Leadership (in 1994), Michael came in and said 'I'm sorry, I voted for John Prescott' and the room burst into spontaneous applause and took him by surprise!
- PB Talking about the old battle with Militant, do you think that the problems Labour had between Militant on the one hand and the SDP on the other was part of a necessary purge that came about from the old battles of the 50s between the Bevanites and the Gaitskellites that finally came to a head or was it defeat that released all that pressure?
- JS I anticipated a big battle, not just here but nationally after 2010 and I think that the party was very disciplined, self-disciplined about the election and about the way it received Ed, particularly with the closeness with the David Miliband vote. And of course we're not very good with breaking the consensus...
- JB Going back to the 80s, Thatcher did a lot of this like Cameron is doing now, driving down living conditions for the working populace and the Poll Tax brought out the very worst in people. That's why we had the Liverpool situation and in Lambeth, with the Trots in London got to control everything with the Chief Executive in one...and we played into Thatcher's hands and very cleverly divided us and brought the hard left out of the woodwork.

- JS At the same time, all the Thatcher things like tax on health, people were sympathetic but if you weren't actually affected by your treatment...where Thatcher made the mistake was the Poll Tax as it affect everybody. People made the mistake that the Bedroom Tax was the new Poll Tax, no, it wasn't not everybody is hit.
- SG That explains the perception of Labour at the last election talking about the very poor and the very rich, we should be talking about those in the middle again.
- JS We put too many eggs in the NHS basket. At the Heywood and Middleton by-election we kept saying it's the NHS when people were saying 'but what about immigration?' It's an issue that affects everybody or enough issues that everyone who is affected and the lingering thing that there are more scroungers than genuine people on benefits.
- PB The reference to 'the squeezed middle' back in the early Eighties there was only a passing reference to the middle classes which the SPD tried to capitalise on...
- JS I wince when I hear someone at regional Labour conferences talking of the need for more 'working-class candidates'. It isn't there any anymore. If there was working class solidarity we'd have been in power since 1900. There's a classification...there are seven definitions (of class) we should be speaking with all of them.

Appendix Two

Interview with the Right Honourable the Lord Bryan Davies of Oldham PC,

19 November 2014

PB You had been an MP in 1974 and then in 1979 after the General Election you were the Parliamentary Secretary?

BD Well, I lost my seat in 1979 and the post of Parliamentary Secretary was an admin post in Parliament for the Labour Party became vacant close to the election because the previous occupant had died. And so the National Executive set about appointing a replacement, a desperately divided National Executive, everyone sympathised with me going for the post knowing that I had been an MP. You had Jim Callaghan on one side and Dennis Skinner at his most forceful, challenging...Tony Benn, of course, was another. Callaghan was keen to get from me the assurance that I wouldn't leave Westminster too soon in pursuit of a seat, and I didn't, I stayed in the job.

PB In September 1979 there was the Party Conference and it was quite a hostile conference. What was your recollections of the period at the time?

BD Well, the most extravagant thing was a real radical leftist MP, Birmingham MP, he tore up the manifesto on the balcony and threw it down on the people below. It was a very ill-tempered conference full of recrimination and it was quite...and Jim stayed on for 18 months I think probably he thought it would give some breathing space to the chance for the party to sort itself out. It didn't really. Of course, Michael Foot won the election and it later came out that the reason Michael won was because key figures were on the point of defecting from the party voted for him because they thought the Labour Party would be a less difficult citadel to conquer if it was divided amongst themselves.

PB So there were people who were doing it deliberately?

BD Oh yes. The conference that did it of course was 1981, the election of the leader. Tony Benn was pushing his reforms through. David Owen wanted one member, one vote. Roy Hattersley spoke on behalf of the middle ground which proposed the Electoral College. I had to talk to Roy because he was proposing the establishment motion. The other motions, David Owen and Tony Benn's...but when I went to speak to Owen about it he said it was just an absolute stitch up arranging the meeting in such a way that their voices wouldn't be heard adequately. I arranged a meeting and persuaded the leader Michael Foot. What you couldn't have was three proposals to call people at a conference, they've got to be a motion and an amendment to be carried. David Owen thought this was absolutely outrageous and thought we were stacking the cards in favour of the existing establishment and what they wanted and tore into me. I had made it clear that we couldn't run a party meeting divided into three votes, it's got to be definitive to be the Parliamentary Party's view to go to annual Conference. But he went up with such venom and I had worked with him in the Health Department and we got on so well, and I was absolutely shocked at the level of invective that he used, basically said it didn't matter anyway because 'we were on our way out', he never identified who the 'we' were but that was before the Special Conference met in September, when the Parliamentary Party was dealing with this in October 79 and then three months later we entered this Special Conference when the new system was set up, one which of course, subsequently Tony Benn almost won on by a fraction of a percentage against Denis Healey for Deputy Leader. But as far as Tony Benn and the others were concerned, this Electoral College of sharing power with the trade unions would be the death of any possibility they would have of winning anything. But it was a tempestuous time and that was in my first two years of being in the job!

- PB That was interesting that you said that David Owen had already said 'we're on our way out', why do think then, why do you think it didn't happen earlier considering the fact that you had Dick Taverne back in the early 70s, why did you think they chose that particular time, was it a perfect opportunity for them?
- BD Well I think the Owens and the Shirley Williams of this world and Bill Rodgers, of course, took quite a bit of steer from Roy Jenkins who was outside the party and had already left the party, and was influencing and persuasive and I think Roy Jenkins indicated that the Labour Party had shifted so far to the left that Tony Benn was able to influence Conference and be left unchallenged.
- PB During that time as well there were various groups such as the Manifesto Group which was coming to an end...
- BD Well, it wasn't coming to end...the key figures in the Manifesto Group, the MP for Newcastle-under-Lyme (John Golding), he was on the NEC for the Telecommunications Union, he made the longest speech in Parliament...and he fought Benn over the election manifesto for 1983 and it was always maintained that what in fact the Manifesto Group people did and those on the right of the Parliamentary Party, by then they had lost many defectors who had gone, always maintained that they deliberately let through many of the radical proposals on the grounds that Labour would bury itself and the SDP would get wings. Well, Labour was against the European Community and against nuclear weapons. Pretty radical. John Golding was a fixer and he always contended that he could have added votes to stop the worst drafts of the manifesto. It's a bit exaggerated but...we fought the 1983 election on an extreme manifesto that we've ever produced and the SDP did rather well.

PB It has been contended that a leader from the left was only able to lead the party in the early Eighties, hence Foot's victory, and that Healey would not have been successful at a general election as he was considered as a divisive figure and would have only delayed the defections. Do you think do you think that if Denis Healey had won, the situation would have been considerably different?

BD Well, leaders make their mark of course, but of course an awful lot of middle ground was wary of voting for Denis because he was thought he'd been heavy handed and not a binder up of wounds and he'd taken them on head on, and of course Denis had a very poor parliamentary vote on leadership. His campaign organisers were obscure when he got about 40 odd votes and he said he would to continue to the last round...

PB That was in 76, wasn't it?

BD Of course he only headed off Tony Benn for the Deputy Leadership. First of all, of course, he combined the worst two portfolios for winning friends in the Labour Party, he was Defence Minister for nearly a decade and Chancellor during the toughest times. You don't become popular within the party with those two. Denis didn't truckle for his votes, he wanted people to vote for him out of respect of his capacity capabilities. But he didn't truckle. His campaign was poorly organised. So I don't think Denis was ever going to be the right wing saviour in the party, the party would probably only take a left-wing leader anyway.

PB And yet Giles Radice said that Denis Healey became Deputy Leader 'saved' the Labour Party...

BD It would have been so much worse. With Michael as Leader and Benn as Deputy Leader would have seen the SDP pick up a lot of MPs from the moderate right of the

party. Denis acted as ballast. He was immensely loyal to the party, Denis, for an outstanding figure, he often didn't look as if he put himself first. Great credit to him.

PB He wasn't the most clubbable...

BD Not at all, no he wasn't, he often only wanted to talk often to people who understand issues who he was actually involved in, and in the Parliamentary Party small number of people could talk intelligently and with sense and when it came to the economy, of course, small number could talk at Denis's level.

PB It would have been someone Peter Shore or earlier Tony Crosland could have debated it forcibly on a level playing field?

BD I'm not trying to be disparaging. We saw it with Denis Healey, we saw it with Nigel Lawson in the Tory Party and we certainly saw it with Gordon Brown during the Blair years, an outstanding figure who is really in charge of the economy whom the Prime Minister in a sense defers to and trusts him and expects him to deliver, and when they do deliver puts them in a strong position. And Healey had far the toughest economic circumstances to deal with but he got us through the IMF and out the other side and was a very powerful speaker on the economy.

PB Do you think he was put in the wrong position by Callaghan at the time in 76, do you think he should have been Foreign Secretary and Crosland Chancellor?

BD He'd have like that role! I think...Callaghan was a trade unionist and knew this was a tough line was needed with the trade unions over wages. I think Callaghan thought that Healey was tough enough for the job and would do the right thing rather than curry favour with the party.

- PB With the move towards the centre in the 80s by the Labour Party, by Neil Kinnock starting to move it to a more centrist, soft left position, do you think that was part of the position of getting rid of the ultras on both sides, with Militant on the left and the SDP on the right, do you think it was part of the correcting process?
- BD The die was cast when Neil became leader in term of the SDP, they were the enemy, I had no problems with that. I think in Kinnock he recognised enemies to the left that Foot didn't. Kinnock knew that there were enemies to the left who were entryists, that their doctrine was an alien force to the Labour Party and Kinnock knew we wouldn't win an election while these people were burying themselves into the party, he took them on with that courageous speech at Conference, it was absolutely electric, it made my hair stand on end. I had been accosted by the glamour boy of Militant, Derek Hatton, who I didn't know at a bar in Blackpool and he was extremely well dressed and wearing a gleaming black leather jacket worth about £600, and he sidled up to me and asked me what I thought the NEC was likely to do. I didn't know who he was but I recognised a Liverpool accent so I thought it was Derek Hatton!
- PB Giles Radice suggested that the Limehouse Declaration when it came out was 'an unexceptional revisionist document,' which would have been perfectly fine within New Labour Party.' Do you think that the New Labour was a by-product of the SDP, or do you think it was something different?
- BD I don't think it was a by-product of the SDP. Blair came in from a different generation, a different generation of support. Blair won elections and carried out policies if they had been in which had they remained in Labour they wouldn't have left. But they weren't in the Labour Party, they were outside. Blair really was a residual legatee of all the leg-work that we had done in the Eighties. But, a great deal of his thinking and his style is quite reminiscent of the SDP and even the right-wing of the party before they

split. Roy Jenkins did regard Tony Blair with approval and nearly all those, Giles is a classic case, was of course the Education Spokesman during the dark years and was didn't land anything when Blair did Government.

PB When the defections took place it was quite obvious that the rancour was obvious to all, it was visceral towards those who left, not just on the left but on the right, like Roy Hattersley who were particularly bitter...

BD Well, Hattersley considers himself quite a bit over from the right, he never kind of signed himself to the Croslandite agenda in that way, but of course he was severely critical of the left. Hattersley is quite a good bell-weather, he stays the course, he's Deputy Leader and stayed the course with Kinnock. I think Crosland would have done that, he never had hesitation in calling himself a Democratic Socialist, you know, he always fought his battles with schools and higher education and set up the Polytechnics. Crosland wouldn't hesitate in saying every socialist had a Democratic Socialist agenda, he wouldn't have a problem with the wording, nor would Brown but Blair clearly did. Blair doesn't have the intellect of Crosland or Hattersley. He has a wonderful winning personality but he isn't an intellectual.

PB He probably be loathed to admit it buy in many respects, he's a Labourist, a Labourite, what Herbert Morrison would say 'Socialism is what we do'.

BD 'It's what I do', Morrison would say we, Blair would say 'I'. Crosland wouldn't, he would write a very serious, seminal book. Of course, you have to say some of us had reservations about Tony, my greatest regret is not walking out on the Second Gulf War. Some of my colleagues did, I didn't, I was only a whip in the Lords. I knew the Second Gulf War was a mistake. I remember the First Gulf War I breathed an enormous sigh of relief when Stormin' Norman was not going on to Baghdad. Tony did that and subsequently looks to have any tethering in ideology at all, he doesn't in fact have any

principle. He's involved with the Great Powers in the Middle East, broker something between the countries, he's an intelligent man but all this stuff now about selling his stuff to the Saudis. Brown devotes all his time to others. Brown would probably place himself to the left of Crosland but would admire Crosland.

Appendix Three

Interview with the Right Honourable Frank Dobson MP, 4 November 2014

PB As a new member of parliament at the time why are your own recollections of the movement in the movement at the time both before and after the nineteen seventy nine elections?

FD Well I don't think there was any suggestion, I was unaware of any suggestion that anybody might want to break away from the Labour party at the time of the seventy nine general elections and then it went on I think, the party conference, for all I know they may have been plotting for years but the outward signs were that it was looking a bit fragmentary I think at the party conference when Jim Callaghan spoke denouncing the idea of an anti nuclear weapons policy although Jim would never have defected and there was the...it looks in the retrospect as if the would-be-defectors voted for Michael Foot rather than for Denis Healey although they would not have agreed with anything Michael Foot said or stood for but they wanted him to win.

PB So Denis Healey contends that he was the commission of enquiry that came about after the nineteen seventy nine conference they agreed to hold at Bishop Stortford the commission of enquiries that the parties were going to conduct its leadership campaign, leadership elections in the future and he contends that that was the crystallise for the SDP to break away but why do you reckon that they did, I mean they had all the opportunities earlier in the nineteen seventies previously to form the party why do you think that that particular?

FD Well a bit like I think a lot of willingness on the part of the Lib Dems in two thousand and ten to their willingness to go into coalition was cause they fancied ministerial cars and ministerial salaries, I don't think most of the people who broke away would have

been, they were quite keen on hanging on to their ministerial cars and ministerial salaries so the chances of breaking away while we were in Government were pretty small, I would think.

PB There have been many accounts of heckling particularly in the 1979 Conference and in nineteen eighties special conferences as well, MPs were corralled and kept away from the rest of the delegates on the floor, what was it like as an MP yourself, even though you were sympathetic from a soft left perspective, what was it like being an MP at that time? Was it quite hostile from the constituency Labour party members or did you find it to be not too bad?

FD No I don't think, I mean I've never liked Labour party conferences even when I was a delegate in the sixties so I've always found them exceedingly irritating and they sort of proceeded from sort of anarchy to mindless rowing with not much in between. So it wasn't personally unpleasant. Eric Heffner denouncing his parliamentary colleagues from the back form but that was Eric Heffner.

PB But you can see you can't for instance sympathise with those MPs who felt that this was what they were facing all the time in their own constituencies and things.

FD I probably exaggerated

PB So when Michael Foot became leader, it's been contended that only a leader from the left of the party was able to lead as leader in the early nineteen eighties and that if Denis Healey had been in charge it would have been just as problematic. Do you contend that it needed a leader from the centre left or do you think that if Denis Healey had been in charge it would have prevented the brake up?

FB I, there is no way of proving it but my own feeling is although I have, still have a lot of time for Denis Healey I think Michael actually was capable of getting the party at least

a couple of steps down the road to rationality. Making Neil Kinnock's election as leader possible and without Neil's contribution as leader its very dubious there would have been much of a Labour party for any of us to lead.

PB So following on from that there was the deputy leader election and you supported Tony Benn?

FD It's the only thing in my life that I'm ashamed of. It's the only political thing in my life that I'm ashamed of.

PB Really?

FD Yes.

PB And looking back on it now do you wish you had voted for Healey instead?

FD Yes, yes I think so it was wrong to vote for Tony Benn.

PB Do you think it would have been, again it's all conjecture do you think if Benn had been elected and he very nearly was do you think if he had been elected as deputy leader do you think it would have had a severe effect on the Labour party?

FD Yes because he was never as fundamentally committed as Michael Foot was. A lot of Tony Benn's things were, in my opinion, rather superficial.

PB So considering that as you've already touched the work that Neil Kinnock began then saw through in the nineteen eighties for the position of the labour party for a more soft left moderate position for the nineteen eighty seven and the nineteen ninety two election.

FD It wasn't a particularly soft left position it was a sensible left position and that's different.

- PB So would you say that again you would move it to a more moderate centre position?
- FD No, no, we had some quite left wing policies under Neil Kinnock and indeed under John Smith but they appeared sensible and they chimed with the experiences and views of people of this country.
- PB Do you think this was the SDP leaving, that this was part of a wider correcting of getting rid of the ultras if you will on both sides if you will the hard right and the hard left of the party?
- FD But in some senses the SDP weren't on the right of the party they were sort of inside right, there were a lot of right wing people who stayed with the Labour party. There was an element of sort of fashionista I think about the SDP.
- PB That's quite a leap some would say it's metropolitan rather than something more national.
- FD Yes I think so. And the only one oddly enough I think David Owen was in many ways more Labour than the rest of them.
- PB Really?
- FD That is not a very fashionable view.
- PB Do you think there is any chance even now after all these years later, do you think any of them would ever, you know that David Owen has become an independent Social Democrat he has become more aligned with Labour again in the last couple of years or so, do you think there is any possibility or indeed be a welcome back for people such as Shirley Williams and Bill Rodgers.

FD No I don't think they would be interested in coming back and it wouldn't do any good if they did, it wouldn't mean anything and they would contribute nothing.

PB So it's something that's already way past?

FD Yes it's been and gone that sort of stuff.

PB And with the SDP being set up and Roy Jenkins becoming the leader in the first instance was there a sense that the more moderate socially liberal element within the party been reduced because Roy Jenkins was associated with being a reformist home secretary of the nineteen sixties do you think that there was any sense in this?

FD No because it's now fashionable because he went to the SDP for the creepy people who write for newspaper columns to attribute all those liberal things to Roy Jenkins. Most of them were originally put forward by people like my predecessor Lena Jaeger or Barbara Castle and the guy who was the strongest advocate for the abolishment of capital punishment. Those things were not initiated by Roy Jenkins and whether he had ever given much thought or effort to them is quite dubious until he became Home Secretary. And in any case yet again when he's Home Secretary he could only do it because he had the wholehearted support of Harold Wilson who was the Prime Minister. If Harold Wilson had been against it, it wouldn't have happened. So I absolutely refuse to, I'm not saying that Roy Jenkins did not make a substantial contribution to it but he didn't initiate most of the efforts in various spheres and he couldn't have done it without the support of the Prime Minister.

It's partly a product of the infantilism of a great deal of political comradeship which has to attribute everything to a set of individuals, you know each topic to a particular individual whereas very little in politics or life is like that.

PB It is interesting also when you think that newspapers such as the Sun and the Mail in the 1980s took great pleasure in denouncing them as so called loony left measures when really places such as gay rights and equality, racial equality legislations would surely have been the natural preserve of the so called Social Liberals and the right of the party and yet these are now things considered to be second nature.

FD Well exactly and that is one of the reasons why I was so and remain so vehemently opposed to this crackpot millionaire Goldsmith's proposal for you can recall MPs in 20% of the electorate decide they want rid of them, and all those topics that you mentioned and that I've mentioned were initiated by people who at the time were the proponents of outlandish ideas which had become part of the consensus, consensus doesn't arrive from consensus, it never has. Consensus is something that is pushed through by people with a real commitment on something and then its gradually accepted and there wasn't a consensus in favour of a National Health Service at the end of the Second World War.

Appendix Four

Interview with Eddie Dougall, 16th January 2016

- PB So the first question I'll ask is really one of political identity. How would you describe your politics, or if you will, vocation within the Labour Party
- ED I would say I was on the Left of the party. It's very sad the way Corbyn supporters and himself have been described as hard left which is not really the case. I'm on the left and I'm prepared to listen to reason, I'm prepared to listen to other people's point of view. I have my own and occasionally change it when it's pointed out that what I'm saying is not bore out by facts
- PB And for the purposes of this can you just identify which constituency Labour Party we'll be discussing
- ED Bury St Edmunds, its Bury St Edmunds now but we were Central Suffolk, we started off when we moved here as Bury St Edmunds, then Central Suffolk and then it went back to Bury St Edmunds and we're going to have some more changes
- PB First off is to look at that period after May 1979 with the defeat of Labour. What I would like to ask first is your own personal recollections of the mood of the party at the time both locally and nationally
- ED Well it certainly wasn't good and the thought of Maggie Thatcher with her previous record of milk snatching and what have you but she was obviously further to the right than any recently previous Tory leaders and Prime Ministers. She wasn't expected to win the Conservative Party Leadership and this is a little bit before 1979 it's interesting for me anyway I was working for the BBC at the time and we were with 24 hours or Newsnight one of those type of programmes and the BBC had venerably chosen to

follow Willie Whitelaw round on the day of the election for leadership and we had quite a pleasant day going round with him, interviewing people around him and then word came through that Maggie actually won and there was Willie and the director and we weren't with him at the time but the director Mavis had gone to have a look and there was poor old Willie sitting in his chair sobbing, head down, just oblivious of everything. He expected to win and most of the party I think wanted him to win but not the PCP. And then we shot off to Smiths Square where she gave her performances as the new leader, so I was really depressed with that and I didn't have a lot of hope for the next election. It's been always the case that the leader of the Labour Party apart from the current one and Michael Foot, the leader has always been to the right of the membership. The membership has always been to the left of all the leaders. Certainly the PLP has always been to the right of whoever is the leader and the membership, there's a big difference between what the membership feels and the PLP feels and sadly I feel that the PLP, the people predominantly in there, they're on the right of the party, they feel they've got given right to run the party and they do not like, they certainly hated Michael Foot and he was a very unfortunate chap, he had no support whatsoever from anything ...part of the PLP and he was really pilloried, the way the press treated him was very bad and Miliband got the same treatment and Corbyn ...but he's so far hanging on. Going back to '79 I didn't expect James Callahan to win and he didn't. From then on it was very depressing, even more so because our constituency party, Bury St Edmunds, went further to the right than I wanted it to go and the branch too wasn't all that politically on the Left. Unfortunately the only source of enthusiasm, the only source of hope I had at that time was from the EU, where we had a venom EU of MEPS and they were what I thought the Labour Party should be doing. They were traditionally Labour minded so there wasn't a lot of joy around to be a member of the Labour Party in those days. The meetings, in some way became a bit more well-attended because of what we were facing from Maggie Thatcher

- PB So more so than they were in the '70s
- ED I think so, yes. To get people interested in politics it takes either great enthusiasm or great objections. Either of those can get people worked up and active
- PB It was interesting when you said about your interest in the Euro MEPS. At the time one of the big arguments within the Labour Party was about the introduction of the then Common Market so it was interesting to hear that you viewed that area as being a beacon of hope
- ED Yes, it was the only area of Labour political life that gave any hope for some people in one form of Parliament were still Labour to me, they'd held on to their main principles. It was what gave most people on the left of the party ...that things weren't as bad as they could have been. That there was still someone in a position of power who could hold the Labour banner
- PB Why was it do you think those who left and became the gang of four, why do you think they chose to leave at that point if the argument had been going on since the '50s and the '60s
- ED I think they chose their moment. Sadly some of those on the right of the Labour Party, and it's the same today, are not too different from left leaning Tories, that could be a good thing or a bad thing but what depresses me now is that those on the right of the party see getting rid of Corbyn as the most urgent action, for instance a lot of them who have been trying to get rid of Corbyn didn't vote against the working tax credits. They prefer to discomfort Corbyn, rather than save a lot of poor people a lot of anguish. Fortunately the dreadful House of Lords managed to put a Kaibosh on it....

- PB And do you think, back in 1980-1981, that the reason for those who defected, those who were also to follow were doing it purely to undermine the leadership of Michael Foot?
- ED I think they wanted the Labour Party to be further to the right than a lot of the members wanted to go and they felt that this was a way of starting again and starting a party in which they would control the agenda, control their policies and their manifesto
- PB Do you think with the period being as it was..... do you think it needed a leader from the left of the party at that time to successfully lead the Labour Party?
- ED I thought so...unilateralism, which is used as a term of criticism. I would just prefer to say rather than unilateralism I would rather say beginning the process of demutifying Armed Forces and what other people do. It could only assist and encourage others to do the same but it may not, but I felt that getting rid of nuclear weapons, at that time the Cold War was hardly cold, at that time it was the most important issue. A leader who would campaign on that was what we needed and today its cropped up again and we are now starting to think as to whether Trident actually does serve a purpose and would it not be better if you're not a pacifist, to have some of the money apart from the NHS, could be spent on the Armed Forces and actually have a successful, an efficient, competent and numerous enough and well-armed enough and prepared-enough Armed Forces and they would bethat's my kind of armament, I want an Armed Defence. I don't want them to have the capability of going off to other countries and imposing our will, I don't think that's the way to do it. If we do that, why shouldn't anyone else do that, a lot of people do that anyway. It shows every other country in the world that if you have power you can impose your will to some extent on some of the less powerful countries and I don't think that's the way to go about things

PB Also in 1981 Dennis Healey was elected as Deputy Leader of the Labour Party. Do you think just as there was a need for a leader of the left of the party in the early '80s to make the running of the Party a viable going concern, do you think it was also necessary for someone from the right of the party to be Deputy because Tony Benn ran as we all know for the Deputy Leadership and became very close to actually winning if it wasn't for decisions of some of those from the soft left such as Kinnock and some of the others and also some various trade unions who decided to support Benn and abstained. Do you think Healey's election as Deputy Leader helped at the time?

ED It's always seen as being politic to have two people, a leader and a deputy, from slightly different, or perhaps even greatly different strands of the party, like today. Whether that's a good idea for a party, for progressing policies, I don't know, but to keep the party together, I imagine that's the reason why it's always done

PB Because there was evidently areas where both Foot and Healey, even though they came from different traditions could find common ground and you'd like to think that within the party itself you can find common ground

ED And it's also important, I think that the leader and Deputy have at least a very good personal relationship and given that you can come to an arrangement, a compromise and modify slightly either one's position and stay friendly not start briefing against the other. If everything's done in the spirit of good will, quite different political leanings of the Labour leader and deputy can make a good.....

PB An agreement to differreferendum of 1975 where members of the cabinet were allowed to campaign various side of the debate which was what Cameron's proposing at the moment. Again political expediency is one of the main reasons for it. At the same time it did demonstrate that after that took place that people were able to come back

within the Cabinet and again co-exist quite easily alongside each other. There were obviously going to be debates and it's peculiar in many respects that the formation of the SDP came aboutgot through all this and yet you still were not actually able to maintainafter all that had taken place

ED Well I suppose the people who left perhaps they were..., certainly Jenkins felt he should have been leader of the party and he saw himself as the top man in the move although David Owen would have disagreed with that. He probably felt rather bitter that he hadn't got further in the Party and he was not going to progress under any leader to the left of him he thought and he was probably right. It's always sad when efficient and competent men and women leave but sometimes it's too divisive for them to stay and coming back to today again I think it's fine to disagree with the leader, to attack the leader is something which is really stupid and shows they don't have the right approach to politics or governing or hoping to govern if you are doing things which harm the Party and the old gang from the Right, the Tony Blair lot during Miliband's election campaign they were really, poisonously against him. I can't see how anyone can be so against the leader of the Party during an election and stay a member of the Party. They have been very lenient with people like that and I think it was Tony Blair who said he would prefer a Cameron Government to one led by Corbyn and that's outrageous

PB And also seems to work against everything that he was involved with because he was a budding MP and then an MP from the early '80s onwards

PB You mentioned before about the CLP in Bury St Edmunds moving further to the Right in 1979

- ED Come to think of it I'm not sure they did move further to the Right. They didn't seem as radical for me, as they could have been or should have been but that sort of means moving slightly to the Right
- PB Labourist rather than Social Democrat? It was interesting because when I was having the interviews with the Oldham CLP members they didn't seem too concerned at the time from their recollections with the SDP, as far as they were concerned their battle was with the militant entryists, which I found quite interesting because I tended to see in more urban areas that militant was more of an issue, particularly in London and Liverpool, the noted case if you will. They only had a couple of people who left for the SDP in that particular area and if you think that Michael Meacher was one of the Oldham MPs and Brian Davis became one of the Labour MPs after Joe Barnett. Here in Bury St Edmunds were there any defections to the SDP and were there any concerns about militant entryists?
- ED Militant didn't encroach at all, it only drew attention and comment as to how it was happening elsewhere, not in Bury St Edmunds and defections to the SDP, I don't recall there may have been some, it's difficult to know unless you are perhaps the membership secretary you don't know how many people left and even then you don't know why they left. Most people leave without any explanation at all and resign, I don't recall anyone. There was no mention of people leaving for any reason, some may have done I don't know about it. It certainly didn't impinge on any political activity or discussion
- PB That's interesting because the reason why some members defect to the SDP or step down, one name which springs to mind is Bob Mellish during the time of the Bermondsey election at the time when Peter Tatchell was running and the fact that they had a rather older established Labour machine there, right wing, quite a catholic

base as well. The concern there was about militant entryism and then you have places such as Cambridge for instance and that was SDP, that was quite a hot-bed of Social Democrat activism if you will so it's interesting to see that not too far away from here that this is almost quite stable in terms of the fact that there were Party members of various strands were able to still maintain cordial relations and there was a common ground

ED As I say it didn't impinge, the fact that the four left made hardly any impact whatsoever and it didn't affect how we campaigned and until the mid '90s there had never been any realistic possibility of changing that and we lost since 97 by 368 votes...but we were always fighting a lost cause really in the attempts to have an MP, coming forward again to 1995 there was a period again in '95, '96,'97 where we ran the County, we ran Mid-Suffolk District Council, we ran St Edmundsbury Council, we ran Bury Town Council, Stowmarket Town Council and we had an MEP, in those days there was one MEP for an area and you voted for him. We had the lot, everything apart from the MP, so until then what happened, whether the SDP formed or not, it wasn't going to affect our vote because they did have candidates, I don't recall how many, They didn't get any MPS...as far as I recall but regarding councillors but I don't remember how many they got but whatever was happening it wasn't going to alter the basic Tory solid Suffolk. Had we been a marginal then this would have been a very big thing.

PB In a seat where it would be considered to be a close two-way or possible three-way battle, I can imagine that it would become a cause of concern if defections took place and therefore it weakens the prospects of becoming a....and yet at the same time from what I could also hear it suggests in a way that because of the certainty of it because it's quite a strong Conservative constituency that conversely it also provided a solidity of the Labour Party membership if you see what I mean

ED Yes, it could have made us draw closer together. We did fight and certainly in the area covered by our Branch, at that point which was Gislingham and Walsham, at that point we contested every District Ward and every County division, everyone and we strayed over when some of the County divisions weren't in our area if they didn't have a candidate we would supply one and we canvassed in the whole lot, we were a very active Branch. We've never been as active as we were then in those days. Sadly, I think I said earlier, you need a disaster or a brilliant victory or something to enthuse people and we were facing a terrible time in those days

PB How a party reacts is based on if its facing success or its facing defeat and that can impinge on the membership and it seems that defeat can actually energise formerly...membership to come back and return

ED Yes, there's so much to complain about and to object to

PB And so we can see Labour almost defined by the advent of Thatcherism in the early '80s and how it reacted to Thatcherism in many respects

ED It could be and to some extent I'm sure that was the case. I don't know how much but certainly the fact that she rode roughshod over conventions, party rules, the way things had been done, she wouldn't have that. There was one really telling point which defined for me Thatcherism, that being the convention that the MP who would look after Police affairs, I've forgotten the name, there was one MP who was a sort of Cabinet Minister but not quite who looked after Police affairs, and the convention was that it would be that if the party in power was Tory then this man or woman would be Labour and vice versa and when she won she kept Elton Griffiths, our MP, on as the Police spokesman

PB; Quite right-wing, pro capital punishment....

ED Yes, and also someone who was so complacent because he was in a job for life, which it was, and he moved to America, and he was known in Parliament as the member for Orange County where he had a house. He was hardly ever in the Country but he just knew he was always going to win and Thatcher just defied that convention and she did the same to all kinds of things and that was noticeable for us

PB I just have a couple more questions and the first one is to talk about whether in your opinion, and I've touched on it before with the defections of the SDP and also later on the expulsion that took place of militants. Do you think that was part of a general corrective process for Labour to get itself back into some semblance of a broader church, whereupon it wasn't being pulled apart by the polls? So that what was left once the expulsions took place and once the defections took place, was what Labour always has been, a rather broad coalition of ideas so you had those who were social democrats, the Croslands, the Hattersleys, people like that, you've got the soft left, the Kinnocks and the Foots and you have the more centre left, the Tony Benn's who moved over there and the David Skinners. Do you think it was part of a corrective process and one which needed to take place perhaps?

ED I don't know if it needed to take place or not. I think it would have been good had we been able to keep militant within the Party. Obviously it had to be observed and if it stepped out of line then something would have to be done. I didn't enjoy listening and watching Neil Kinnock's speech about what the militants were doing

PB 1985 that was.....

ED Yes, he really sort of theatricalised that. There was a feeling within the PLP, as I said before was always and has always been to the right of membership feelings, that they didn't like militant and some of the things they were doing weren't following Labour Party rules. One of the problems is that Labour Party rules have been set over the

decades by basically the right of the party and they really don't want to give up that right. There's something I object to in the Parliamentary system and it's in all parties that when you have the leader elected and the dust settles you find that there's about a hundred people or so who have a political self-interest to vote with the party regardless of what they feel, now it's a shame that that is such a large amount of people and I think more people with independence of mind, able to vote in the way they feel they want to vote would be a good thing and that would be good for all parties to have

PB Not changing the electoral system perhaps, but changing to more proportional representation.....

ED The only thing I have against any kind of proportional representation is that you can't vote for one person, you vote for the party and in the Labour Party, I think it's true to this day, that the list of people from whom would-be MPS could be chosen by the Constituents is selected by the hierarchy of the party. They decide who is a decent candidate or not. I would prefer the membership of a Constituency to make a horrendous mistake and choose the wrong man or woman and then they themselves, that constituency would live with the consequences, rather than have the choice limited to a group of people who won't frighten the horses, who won't step out of line too far, and basically the hierarchy of the party feels they can handle. I would prefer some really right-wing person elected, some really left-wing person elected if that's what the Constituency party wants. If Democracy means anything that's what should happen. There should be no over-arching authority to say no you can't choose him. There's been a number of cases where you've had a hard-working man or woman who's been a Councillor, or a Secretary or any sort of a position in a Constituency and has worked there for years, lived there for years and knows an awful lot of people. That person can be overridden and someone parachuted in because they want someone – Tristram

Hunt was a case in point – it should be up to the Constituency to make their own decisions and stand or fall by that decision, individually, as a constituency

PB My final question and I think we've been speaking about this throughout the conversation, about common ground and between those who see themselves on the Left and those who see themselves on the Right. During the time when the CLP was there a lot of common ground or particular points of division at the time?

ED It's difficult to recall now. There were always people on the left and people on the right in the Constituency and we would each try to get our own view accepted. Sometimes we succeeded and sometimes we failed. But in general we would never have done what is going on at the moment, and campaigned in effect against the Party in any way whatsoever. We saw loyalty as having to be earned rather than something which is automatic and is demanded. Loyalty is earned if it's deserved and so whoever was putting forward and whatever the subject of the proposition or whatever was put forward, whatever that was it would be discussed and it should succeed on its merits. Whether it goes against Party policy is something else and I think Constituencies should have the autonomy to have their own policies. When it comes to elections then if it's in the manifesto we have to stick to that because we've signed up to agree to do that but I think more autonomy for Constituencies would be a very good thing.

PB Would you say that because Labour was in Opposition at that time and with the particular nature of Thatcherism that was the binding force, the unifying force, when there were many in the Party who were diametrically opposed to each other. The glue that kept everyone together was the opposition to Thatcherism?

ED Yes, I think that's true. I suppose, I mentioned earlier, I think it takes a disaster or a triumph to enthuse people and get people interested enough to come to meetings and put their point of view and argue vociferously for that view and then when the decision

is taken you accept that. And yes I think Thatcher did bring us together, rather and there were so many things that we disagreed with her about that there wasn't too much time to argue amongst ourselves.

Appendix Five

Interview with Baroness Joyce Gould of Potternewton, 10 December 2012

JG I would say for John Smith in particular, their loyalty to the Labour Party was the institute that mattered.

PB Was it a tribal thing?

JG Absolutely tribal had they gone it would have prompted a whole range of people going with them. We would have been left with a very left party if you think that the next stage what happened to the party the very reason these people gave they were very minor in their thinking, these people gave was the advent of the trots who were beginning to make inroads to the party then how would we have coped if we hadn't have had those people it's a very its theoretical but interesting I'm interested in that sort of thing. I think the liberals would not have survived unless they had done something right dramatic and you know in a sense what you have got now with the Lib Dems, you have a lump of the Labour Party and a lump of old liberals, the liberal party still exists. And there is a separate SDP. If it quite fascinating how that might have gelled out but anyway you tell me the first thing you have on your thing.

PB The first question I was going to ask was the same question I asked Lord Kinnock and Lord Radice about the '79 conference not the Wembley Conference, where Ron Haywood made a scathing speech against Jim Callaghan.

JG You have got to put it in its context both Giles who were outside it. I am starting to write my memoirs, I am trying to write a dramatic chapter, I went to head office in 1975 when I think about the national executive as it was then of which I am going to be extremely rude and scathing about they were so intense on having a fight they did not have the

concept of this is the Labour Party we are taking about. It was bitter it was nasty. It was rude it was awful. I put my head in my hands at the moment. And in a sense Ron Heywood was the general secretary, Tony Benn's behest. He wasn't very bright Ron Heywood. He came up through the organisation and he should never have been the general secretary. He would do things I used to do a lot of international work and he was equally scathing there. He owed and he couldn't do it very well because he was a terrible speaker. In '79 actually the mood started to change. Roy Jenkins did the Dimpleby Lecture which talked about revalue content in a sense whose fault was it. Was it because of that that Ron Heywood had a go what it did do was set off the manifesto. I don't know what Gerald said about it, he was very involved in it. They set it up because of the influence of Tony Benn and the power of the unions. It had some prominent people in it I can't remember who they were actually. I was talking to my daughter and I asked her what she remembered because she was involved in all this. Campaign groups and manifesto groups not that she achieved anything. They were all negative proactive none with a programme of their own. Slightly different was the Tribune group who were soft left. They were a whole lot of you know my daughter was actually secretary and it was a group who tried to come up with ideas not negatives like the manifesto group. Don't forget we have just had the winter of discontent. And Jim Callaghan did it all wrong going too early. Not going in '78 who gave him that advice everybody has different stories whether it was Jack Cunningham in fact it cause Jim in other ways to take the blame for that election cause it should never have been that way and you have got all this all the pressure going all around and we lost the general election. Jim resigned, we then moved in, what we caused the biggest furore of all with Michael Foot becoming the leader. I was a very dear friend of Michaels and I adored him as a man, but he was hated by the left. He was hated by the right and he tried to sit in the middle and made some serious mistakes. That actually in a

sense made things even worse. Combined with that the leader should be elected by conference.

I was a party official and you can't express what you think and there was something very wrong. The leader of the party was the leader of the CLP and the party did not have a leader. So there was a case for change there really was. Whether we got that change right was another story. They had an agreement of the Electoral College and the unions agreed by the NEC of picking the leader. At the same time that all this was happening I actually think. I don't want to judge I would really like to know what went on behind the scenes of those people got together and formed the SDP I cannot believe that these people suddenly happened. I think there was an attempt I am sure there was to try and check and change the party so it didn't so they didn't have to do that, I will check the dates. The day that the party decided to disassociate itself with Europe and the people that went forward to join the SDP were all pro Europe. They were like me like they pro Europe. They were passionate for being pro Europe and at the time the party disassociated itself with Europe and that was the beginning of We cannot go on any longer. I have got a whole list of dissociations.

We had this conference I was supposed to be in charge of this conference. It was an absolute disaster, it was terribly hard for us as officials to do. With all this dissent and rows and people standing up but the other thing that affected this conference was its structure because we had a whole series of possible amendments to what we had. And each one was debated separately and we voted separately. So what you got was gaps between votes. And that people were sat around doing nothing. And this made matters worse. I was my worst experience I used to run conferences but nothing compared to Wembley.

PB Is it true that they had MPs corralled in like a pen.

JG That is a bit of an exaggeration. I will tell you now that MPs always a section at conference even now and always had a section at the side.

PB I think it was David Owen who said that.

JG I can see why they said that. We always had a trade union section a constituency section and a MPs sections. My memory says that we always had this structure. And it did not stop the MPs speaking or participating. And they always sat together. It's an example of everybody blaming ever body else and the distrust.

PB That's interesting you hear from the ones that left that their voices not being heard the way the amendments were structured. But everybody had their chance to speak and probably that is why MPs and party members say that party conference is being staged managed these days.

JG In those days party conference was much freer than it is now. Party conference is not the same it is all too structured. This year it wasn't too bad they had good platform speakers and they had a good rally but it actually is a bit of a farce. You fight for what you want. So I think that was a real problem but the attitude was sometimes a bit of a farce. It was just an example of, they hated the action. I have been doing some work around the militant stuff, you know I got rid of all of the militant and you know exactly the same I have been reading Tony Benn his diaries and some of the things he is proud to have said were absolutely awful I mean really awful and I cannot cope with people who behave that way. I think for me you did get the very next day, you know you did get this statement and a press statement but the fact was and I cannot believe and maybe I am being too silly I don't know, but I cannot believe that they went from that conference and the next day and they were able to produce something like that.

But I think by March we had twelve MPs resign so I think you could see this was the start of something dramatic but if you think about the facts and I don't know the months and this could be significant I don't know but there was a conference in Portsmouth, it was held by between the liberals and some of the would be SDPs and that was in 1981' but I don't know what month it was in I will have to check that out because , and you still have one of the things I think is important you still had for instance you had all this going on and Shirley Williams and David Owen both were members of the national executive committee at the same time as I cannot possibly believe they were not organised themselves. Bill Rodgers was trying to cover up and he did resign, Shirley Williams resigned sometime later than the others and I don't know when David Owen did, but when I was doing some of my militant stuff and we talked about it within the party it was said wasn't that what the SDP did. And it was difficult and we had no intention of destroying the party that same way and it was interesting that they was seen that they were still working even though they were still in the Labour Party.

PB The practice is still the same Isn't it and this is the same isn't it whether you are to the left or the right you are still a party organisation, wasn't it the social democratic association that used to organise the right...

JG I just can't believe that it sort of happened I mean one of the people was a back bencher who upset me more than anybody else I could live with the showrooms? But so what they were on their own agenda.....was John Cartwright he was an MP for Woolwich or somewhere like that and John Cartwright and an MP whose name I always forget he was an MP for Fulham ...He was on the left and John Cartwright was he was on the right what was his name? And we were sent off and it showed to me examples of the NEC not living in the real world. We were sent off before the '83 election to the Channel Isles to do an analysis of when we win the 1983 general election you know this is a tax haven what will we do you know I have never heard such nonsense in all my life I was

conducting this and John Cartwright and we never ever wrote the report. Because John Cartwright defected and to me it was all a farce I mean the idea of that kind of thing in '83 against all this background against all that was going on but let's face it we did we went off to the Channel Isles and it was never mentioned and I like John and I just thought that ...and one of the other things actually just as an aside which I found, I was on the Jenkins commissions booking the elections in the House of Commons and Roy always used to refer to us as and I said to him one day Roy you are not one of us and he couldn't even all those years later couldn't disassociate himself from us and yet in some ways he was very much a ...and yet he still had this feeling somehow he was still part of us but the sad thing was he was not with us anymore. Although he was quite close to Tony Blair but I think in some ways it took the party a very long time to recover it really did because we then went from crisis to crisis actually. I think what was interesting was they did gradually build up what did they get they got, I can't remember how many MPs went over and they gradually, I thought there was more than that, what have I got there, it was fifteen and then it did go to twenty five. And then what I found fascinating was what I found particularly interesting about the SDP I mean in some ways to me discredit it that made it a bit more. When you get somebody like Sue Slipman who I am told is an active student communist member joins the SDP I mean there was a big furore when she did that and one of the other very interesting things was that Anna Soubry is now the Public Health minister of the Conservatives and who actually joined the SDP from the Conservatives, so she defected. And I find that quite fascinating because it was quite radical and I met her a couple of weeks ago and I thought maybe she did have some sort of...so it is fascinating to the people that actually went in.

They only got one conservative MP I think but they did then pick up all those disaffected people that hated the Tories and hated the Labour Party cause the Labour Party was

in such a mess so it did pick up this mess they became a sort of media baby the media loved them they absolutely loved them I find it fascinating cause you still see the media loving Shirley Williams like they did then.

PB Roy Hattersley said it's the Shirley Williams Phenomenon.

JG Shirley got a good reputation as a Secretary of State for Education she was an extremely clever woman. She was terrible for making decisions. I remember someone saying it's like having a jelly fish on a string. She was so bad at making decisions but very clever. She was also very good at telling a story over a health bill. She got very good publicity over how she was sorting it out, she never voted against anything on that bill, she voted constantly for it. David Owen never voted liberal. My brother left labour for the SDP and said if David Owen became leader he would quit. The reason was that David Owen was too far to the right. And the liberals are too soft. He was very arrogant. When he sat on the NEC and you were an official you were lucky to get a hello. If you met him in the corridor he didn't acknowledge you. None of the drivers would take him because he was so rude to them. He was sure he was always right. What was funny was that he was passionate about the health bill. The NHS was something he actually believed in and to see the possibility of privatisation made him go back. He used to come to the Lords and very occasionally he would speak on foreign affairs, he never came in to visit so when he came in people said he had something to say until the health bill when he said a lot about his belief in the NHS. So I will give him credit for that. And what was that he tried to keep the SDP together and ended up with just a sort of right you know. They changed the legal aid bill and lost a lot of MPs but if you go back to their relationship with the liberals if you think were they stood particularly on war and minister of defence their policies were very much akin with the liberals and you could actually see how they could do that. I mean it's a fascinating thing because the old Lib Dems party was a hard...how can I put that it

wasn't right wing but it was a libertarian type a party that you could never trust. I mean I could always say not the quote but the conservatives were the opposition and the liberals were the underdog. In fact on one occasion I came bowing to a top liberal agent to try stopping a liberal getting a seat. We didn't they won by about forty votes which quite honestly there was a real hatred but they were operators they knew how to do it. In fact I think they knew how to do it than the Lib Dems know how to do it. And I come from Leeds and Leeds...you could see in West Leeds where my ex-husband was a councillor they were long term organisers. They didn't expect it to happen tomorrow so one ward absolutely every ward going was won everything would go into one ward. They would win that one ward. And then they would move everything into the next one. And eventually I have to say the sheer neglect by the Labour Party, I went up to Leeds and to a party official and he came out in tears. Because we lost that seat and I was still in Leeds when we put Joe Dean in, and I did open hours at the Leeds office there, I did all the work to get them that seat. And to see it thrown away literally through neglect and put Michael Meadowcroft in was absolutely devastating. It was all organised in a way and of course Michael Meadowcroft give him credit is still liberal. And he has never changed his view. But what I do think is interesting though is why did the electorate fall away from us. Why did that happen? And I think in some ways this related to the or to two things one I think that people like things solid and straight and I think they were a bit too liberal. And I think the other thing regarding the electorate why the electorate moved away gradually was that the Labour Party was putting its house in order. And therefore people were going back to help him do that. They were gradually going to come back. And you remember when we had two SDPs Peers who tried to come back to the Labour Party. And the Labour Party accepted their membership. And there was a big row here and our labour group were loath to accept them into the group. And being a Labour Party official I had to stand up and say this group has to accept every group offered to the Labour Party and therefore we did and

we had a big row about it because the real resentment about the people coming in was much more so.

Because these people had deserted the Labour Party. They had been disloyal they had deserted us. And so in some ways never to be forgiven and you are hurt by this sort of feeling and when I think of someone like Roger Liddle. Roger Liddle went to the SDP and comes back as an advisor to Tony Blair. I quite like Roger but did he come back because he wanted to be an advisor to Tony Blair or did he come back because he genuinely wanted to come back. Now you know I'm being a bit unfair to him, and there was a lot of concern about when he did come back in the party say you know 'how can Tony do this?' One of the interesting things which I think is quite interesting is name because calling yourself Social Democrats Party is a link to try and associate themselves with the European parties. And there was this suggestion that they should call themselves New Labour. And that got rejected. And it's very interesting and David Lipsey's was in the book at the time he was Tony Crosland's... and he has just written a book and he goes on to say how he advised Tony Blair to call it New Labour. And David Lipsey went on to ask these things, and you could see this influence and David's is a very good friend of mine. And you could see that influence coming through.

PB It sounds like a true confession because firstly you mention Tony Crosland, one of the things I have mentioned that I read about is Denis Healey and Giles Radice and David Marquand, another former Labour Party member who argued that if Tony Crosland was still alive he would not have defected. He was a true labour the same way as Roy Hattersley and he was on the right. So that is interesting to see the man who pretty much was a modern revisionist, he would not have left the party.

JG I think in some ways it was tribal but some people were determined to let the party down knowing all the problems. I will tell you a story. The 1983 election which was

beyond a disaster and we had these forty people complaining and it was like a public meeting. I remember we used to meet at Transport House and Roy Hattersley and Gerald Kaufman said after the meeting lets go off and we went to Roy Hattersley's house, we sat and talked with our head in our hands and said what are we going to do. How are we going to sort it out, I grew up with Gerald, the feeling was we had got to do something. I think that people like Roy and others that the big stumbling block was the NEC. And their attitude, well the descent just went on. We had serious problems with the soft left. Were they didn't want sanctions or expulsions. And wouldn't accept that this was necessary. That Margaret Beckett who did sign the dissenting report on the Liverpool enquiry. It was really nothing to do with the issue more to do with that we disagreed with that concept. And it took them some time to realise that the only way to get this party back was by doing that. So they did and I remember all sorts of things, I remember travelling the country with Roy Hattersley I must check what year that was. The NEC would come up with all sorts of things. We must build the membership this will get rid of this. Proper political education and all this. Roy Hattersley and I were commissioned to go round the country and talk. At regional conferences to find out how the party was thinking and feeling and all that. But it was an attempt by people like Roy in all fairness to see what the hell we could do there was a feeling of despair. Never the less they stayed and fought. It raised a wider question one has to think is it possible in this sort of day and age to introduce a new political party into the system. And if you think about in a sense it was almost overnight what the SDP tried to do. I think you could do it gradually, very, very gradually the concept. All of a sudden tried to poison that poison is the wrong word tried to introduce a new political concept that just didn't work.

PB That's what happened when UKIP is about.

JG Yes.

PB That's what the Liberal democrats are trying to take over the centre ground because New Labour moved to the left now they have got the coalition to try to box them in. it's a very crowded centre that labour is trying to occupy as well,

JG I hope it is, I think we have got a lot of work to do the party to really establish itself. Maybe the One Nation concept is the way it is going to do it I hope so. We have got to be sure about what we are doing there is a lot of work going on. There is a lot of policy work going on. But at the end of that we have got to have and what the SDP didn't have is something very solid and understandable and clear. The SDP had...Rodgers and Owen were MPs when this was happening voting against the Labour Party on rent increases, the Labour Party had accepted the rent increases, they also voted against the party when the party decided it was opposed to selling council houses and then changed its mind. There were one or two little incidents where actually they showed themselves to be quite brave. Where the Labour Party went wrong we did on one or two social things they were soft liberals and it's inevitable they went, I am trying to think of when they left. What the feeling in the party was like, what it did do of course was the right of the party was decimated when the left grew stronger pseudo-left, they weren't left. I used to argue with them for women's issues and they used to say it will be alright when the revolution comes and never get on your platform with you. They were only playing at it.

Appendix Six

Interview with the Right Honourable the Baroness Dianne Hayter of Kentish Town

24 November 2014

PB The first question is about your own recollection of the party up to and including 1979 General Election.

DH Oh up to the '79 General Election because before this because it got worse, the awful bit was the party conference after the 1979 General Election. It got bitter. The bits before that were really pretty bad, I think I think I used to drink before I went to the GC actually. I was always the odd one out if you like. And I felt that the party was, I come from South Wales from a very mining community. And it really helped that I was more aware of their problems. I was a magistrate in the inner London so I could see the problems people were having with paying their rates as it was then. And then I would go to a Labour Party meeting and there was this sort of, I didn't use the word contempt at the time, that's looking back, I think there was sort of contempt for the electorate, that they knew best. That people were out of touch with Labour voters. Now that in itself was one thing but what there was the bitterness to people like me. It was really horrendous at meetings people wouldn't sit next to me and stuff like that. And they would play tricks and sort of move silly resolutions and look around at you to see how you had voted. So there was a sort of psychological stuff going on which meant a lot of people of course particularly our older people just stopped going to meetings. So it really wasn't very pleasant. It got worse later on but the other feeling was that people would use the word traitors about people who were in Government so it wasn't that good. I was with the Fabians at the time, I was assistant general secretary at the time. But I had quite a lot to do at our local Fabians societies. And I used to find a lot of people who became Fabians were very good for our memberships. Because they

could just get away they didn't have to go to GC. So it was happening around the country but it wasn't just in London it was worse in London. So some of the local Fabians were reactive cause people could just go and discuss I don't know housing issues without it being for this amendment. So that to me seemed a symptom of the fact that a lot of people were very uncomfortable about party meetings.

PB It does seem like a foreign country these days when you think of the seemingly staged managed way conferences are run now it's not for parties, they've not completely taken over dissent but to see the conferences back then and some might say oh that was a proper way of doing conferences and things like that but it was a bear pit from what...

DH It was a bear pit and also nonsense. Two things, there was a lot of television coverage. We could probably get away with dissent now, now television doesn't cover us anymore. But that doesn't matter. But of course it was all completely unrealistic because people even now look back and say oh in the old days we used to control it. When I wrote my Fabian pamphlet in 1970 after one of these conferences, maybe it was a bit later, but at that point the CLPs only had about 10% of the voting conference so they kept feeling they could put their own resolutions to conference, they could decide, the reality was the trade unions could control 90% of the votes at conference so it was complete nonsense so not only was it a bear pit but it wasn't actually decision making. And that is one of the things I still find it difficult to get across to some of the people at the time - oh at least we were making decisions - well no they weren't actually. So it was horrendous, obviously we learnt some of the wrong lessons and we became over control freaks. But I think if anyone had been in the bear pit, in your words, understood that you...I mean I remember once on television rather like a Newsnight - now you'd always have a Labour person or a tory person on Newsnight or whatever - but in those days you would have three Labour people arguing against each other on television. So it was pretty horrendous.

PB Sorry to bring it up. The next question is about the 1979 party conference in September and the subsequent special conference at Wembley. The vote was carried for the mandatory reselection of MPs and the control of the manifesto and further to that the party had its commission for enquiry, as I mentioned I spoke to Joyce, (DH Joyce had that in one.) Denis Healey made the contention that it was the commission that was the crystallisation of the breakaway. Do you think that helped to trigger deflections of those that went on to form the SDP?

DH It was the stage one conference, it was the second Wembley conference. Because at that time David Owen and the others still were fighting. David Owen in his case wanted one member one vote. I know what blouse I was wearing at the time, pale blue it had a kind of Chinese collar. And I can remember exactly the feeling was, what happened we had a lunch time meeting, a Fabian fringe meeting at the lunchtime in Wembley and we were in one room and Hattersley was speaking, the picture on the front of my book if you've got the paperback is taken there, they cut Hattersley off, that's the Chinese thing, that is taken at the fringe meeting during the 81' Wembley conference and Hattersley was the speaker and we had an absolutely crowded meeting and the council for social democracy I think it was called at the time the group around what became the gang of four was the gang of three at the time. It was the three people that had written the letter to the Guardian because Jenkins hadn't come back. It was the hour of three having a meeting next door and we turned up so Mary Gowdie went and stole all their sandwiches. To bring them in for us lot. But certainly I think at that stage had the vote on the election of the leader gone differently I still think they might have stayed. You would have to ask them but Bill Rodgers got ill at the time because he was so torn up by it. Everybody was really tense but of course it hits you back and I'm not certain had the vote gone the other way and had we had an electoral college that gave us votes to them I'm not, I'm still not certain it would have happened. But of course it

was not simply the vote on that but they saw the tactics they saw that feelings hadn't really seen the light so it was a lot of things at that day. But I wasn't at the commission, I wasn't there I think it was still probably saveable. I mean there were still other problems. You would have to ask them. Two of them in particular Bill and Shirley were really born into this movement. Bill, you know, in it from a youngster had been a fighter he had run CBS he'd saved them against plan Gaitskell I don't think he practically left Labour.

PB This was one of the questions I asked Lord Radice. Do you think there would ever be a time when you could envisage the Gang of Three as is now returning back to the Labour fold?

DH And you know psychologically they are still Labour. But you know I would open my arms willingly to them because I don't think they are... Shirley's been a bit difficult about the NHS but that's.... Deep down you know it must be quite hard to put much between us.

PB Probably say the same about some of the earlier social democrats such as Charles Kennedy as well. I would say.

DH Yes, I don't know him but that's quite possible. There are a number of people who I am not going to name who have said to me particularly after reading the book had I known then what I know now in other words if the unions were beginning to do it they might not have gone.

PB That's interesting it's also sad when you hear about John Grant defecting. And John Cartwright. And Tom McNally.

DH Yes just harder to hear because he came in and sat on the tory Government up to that point that's pretty unforgivable, Tom was a Fabian, one of my predecessors. They couldn't resist the lure of Government. Power.

PB You just mentioned before in a fight back about the delegates heckling you received some unpleasant heckling at the first party conference. What was your recollections of what it was like for yourself. Quite unpleasant?

DH It was. The first time I got really badly heckled was when London was at the conference. I was doing the reply from the executive and I had no idea what the issue was. But on the platform I said, schools are run for children not the teachers - I thought they were going to kill me. It seemed to me such an obvious thing to say. Yes it was very unpleasant luckily I have always been quite tough. I have very good friends. You know like people who are here now like George Robinson and John Speller who were in the unions like Roger Godsiff. There were a group of us who worked for trade unions who held each other's hands if you like. So there was always a group around me that got us through it. If you want the honest answer what hurt me much more was a personal thing that happens to one friend I was the Fabian and we had working in the Fabians Hope Roper and Jenny Beaver.

Jenny was married to a lovely man called Colin, a nice man and very good and older than me and taught me about the Fabians. He wrote a Fabian pamphlet that I published and I got to know him and his wife Jenny. Jenny came to work at the Fabians and Hope married John Roper who is now an MP. He was an MP somewhere up in Lancashire and so these were colleagues of mine who I had a duty of care towards. Both their husbands left the Labour Party. I had two members of staff sleeping with the enemy. To watch people go through that because up till then on TV you watch a programme and your reactions are the same but watching TV and reading newspapers

and having different reactions and I was much more eaten up by that sort of thing. John roper who had been treasurer of the Fabians and had been very close to me and suddenly he was in another political party and funnily enough I found that much harder than being screamed at by a group of people I didn't respect. It's not as if I respected those people.

PB It's when friends and close colleagues seemingly just leave.

DH That I found much harder I'm not saying it was a badge of honour to be shouted at but I was young and strong.

PB The next question you mention Frank Chapple of the EETPU for the capitulation at the Commission of Enquiry. You also said there was a lack of leadership on the right against the Bennite left. Why do you think the unions on the right of the party failed to communicate and organise before 1981. I know the liaison committee with David Owen why do you think there was such a disconnect.

DH The unions were at their most powerful, they had 13,000,000 members, but maybe that explains it, they did take their role as the industrial representatives for the working class people very strongly. They did look for political leadership and the problem was the MPs were completely spineless. And if there had been one really strong MP, although Denis Healey was great he himself was having difficulty and he was very concentrated on parliament. There was no great leader outside of parliament.

Peter Shore finally got brought along side and people like that but they organised only in parliament so they were organising the manifesto group but it was only MPs they never reached out to the other lot and so there was a real disconnect with the unions who were looking for leadership and the MPs. Let's be nice to them - they were going through their own reselection. They were having a tough time and were focused on

their own survival and didn't think about the party as a whole. We didn't have a general secretary who should have done it, but the general secretary was in hock to the NEC, we had first Ron Haywood and then Jim Mortimer they were the wrong people to do it had we had a general secretary of an earlier type but the general secretary had been weakened so neither the party itself and the MPs were just looking internally with the unions waiting for guidance because it wasn't their job. The top of the trade unions were always on the general council it was their number two's who were on the NEC then again they weren't as involved as they should have been .

DH And I think he at one point did point to the MPs like they were a separate entity and say this is why we are here. Because the MPs are elected by Labour voters they had forgotten about Labour voters. It was dreadful.

PB I want to talk to you about the St Ermins group which met on February 10th 1981. an immediate attempt to set up an organised response in wake of the Limehouse declaration in an attempt to keep the party together. It brought in moderate union leaders. They were concerned about the hard left on the NEC St Ermins group and the subsequent Labour solidarity were the subsequent response bringing together the more moderate trade unions and MPs. Were there ever a sense in the unions that they had to step in? We just touched on this because of the spinelessness of MPs, did they have to do this?

DH I did my interviews, they just said we have to do it because there is no one else. No point giving money to the Labour Party if it's not electable. The Labour Party is to get elected. We set it up in 1900 to get elected to get people into parliament. Other than that there is no point. This is obvious they were very clever it's got to be electable. They just felt it's our party in a sense and they felt that MPs had let it drift away to the hard left. We must have it back and they were much more in touch with their members

around the country and they were hearing and they got the data that trade unions weren't voting Labour. I do think that Roger Godsiff and John Speller and Keith Heller were feeding the data in at the right moment. I think a certain amount of help was given that our own members weren't voting Labour. They were quite tough they weren't like my earlier book about all the people who left school at ten and a lot of these people had left at fourteen. They came up the hard way. Charlie Turner - I sent him a letter don't throw your archives away. He had left school early and his father had been on the permanent way and he was on the trains and he read his stuff on the trains. They knew where they came from and it was that sense of connection.

PB Its interesting now in the present date of the Westminster disconnect and this was being said in 1981.

DH You are right but they didn't use those words.

PB It's the same now when Cameron is saying Unite and Unison are running Labour someone should say you do know who we are the Labour Party.

DH We have problems with the Labour Party about the unions and basically four men who run it now. And in terms of governance it is not right for the unions to have so much power.

PB It harks to the United States like the mega unions. I can see that for being a point of concern.

DH In the states although a friend of mine is the head of Wisconsin's union. They are quite in the south. We had balance in my own union the GMB we really did keep an eye on our union we had these regional barons which were a problem at the time. They probably represented their members very well, if you were a consultant and asked how

you would run a company called the Labour Party you would say the governance is not there.

PB So it's quite interesting to say do you think it's a battle for the future?

DH Yes we will have to do that, we will have to sort it sometime. It's too important an organisation, the Labour Party, not to have its decision making correct.

PB One step has been made I suppose, you know, in the last eighteen months with what Ed Miliband has out in place. But like you say.

DH And it's about how the NEC work. You go to NEC meetings and there is about 40 people in the rooms I still have management stuff you know basically you have twelve people who cannot run an organisation. It's too unwieldy. You don't have collective agreements you know I mean collective commitments to decisions and stuff like that.

PB Anyway going on to, you know how there was a two way battle with union leaders trying to convince those who were thinking of leaving such as Shirley Williams, and Shirley Williams was also trying to convince people like Alan Tuffin to defect and now Alan Tuffin he was quite unequivocal saying I am not leaving, saying I am loyal 'I might sympathise with some of your ideals but I am loyal to the Labour Party'. Do you think there was ever any chance of a union ever disaffiliating with the Labour Party?

DH No because the only one would have been Frank Chapple and there was no way he would have done you know, having got the communists out and having got this back into mainstream he wasn't going anywhere there was no way he was going anywhere. And somehow I knew that, I was worried about MPs. But I never worried about the unions seriously. And of course it did help that they setup sterling Straight away. That really solidified that. But I mean I don't think that any of the small unions even thought about it. This was our party, it did feel very strong at the time.

PB It's interesting because if you think of a union such as USDAW for example which like in 1975 were one of the few unions that were actually saying that they were in favour of staying in the common market. You would have thought that might have been a case of well you never know. But if they didn't like you say the unions were the party. They created the party and they were the ones who keepers of it. The keepers of traditions.

DH Also something which, and don't take this wrongly, but their people were very embedded in the party locally I mean those days at our party meetings we would appoint magistrates essentially, not quite but you know we would certainly appoint the school governors or whatever, they were called school managers for juniors and governors for seniors. So a lot of union officials were quite embedded into the system.

And because of the party they got positions and I'm not saying that in a sordid way it just means that the party to them was big, it wasn't something up in London it wasn't something but their own local party, party activity was important to them as well.

PB So the next thing is getting on to the leadership party itself and someone said it needed a leader from the left in the early '80s.

DH Crap!

PB That answers that one! Because some say as well that Healey wouldn't have been successful, do you contend evidently that Denis Healey if he had won that things would be considerably different?

DH Yes well I've got a chapter in a book on what if Prime Ministers that never happened. and I did one about Denis Healey And I did two actually one about had he lost the deputy leadership and I did one about becoming Prime Minister which was completely outrageous and over the top. Wonderful. I had him winning over Foot but the Falklands still happened so we were never going to win the '83 elections. However I had him

putting on his old retired battle fatigues after we reinvaded the Falklands. Out with the troops which he would have done, he'd have been the Falklands he would have been there, he'd have had his camera. He'd have been on the beach probably, he would have been absolutely over the top. Outrageous. But he would have been in there. I still don't think we would have won the '83 election but I had him winning the '87 election. So people didn't vote for Foot because he was from the left. The MPs thought it would give them a quiet time in their constituencies. Selfish the lot of them. Some of them adored Michael. No account for taste. But you know there was a whole sector who either thought Healy was a bully and no one wants bullies to be leaders or they were protecting their own backs. They didn't dare tell their GC they hadn't voted for him. I don't think many voted for him because they thought we needed someone from the left. To sort out the left because at that stage it wasn't in their minds, their tiny little Chinese minds that a leader was going to take on the left. They weren't forward thinking they were in it for survival .so no I don't think we needed a leader from the left we needed a leader and Michael Foot bless him may have been many things but not a leader.

PB No he was a good leader of the House of Commons or anything and Employment Secretary because he had a contact with the industrial base which was a big thing to be approached but I think. (He wasn't a leader) and that's interesting as well because they are also a crew and also Tony King who they talked about there were some on the right who voted for Foot (well Neville Sandleson was one of the ones and Mike Hancock?) or was he one of the ones who said we have found somewhere else to go. Mike Thomas, that's it.

DH There was someone else besides Neville Sanderson because it was always said they did. I'm not sure if they did or not. It wouldn't surprise me.

- PB It's almost like they had that idea set up in order to facilitate a...
- DH Yes I don't think so because Neville Sanderson wasn't particularly part of the gang of four. Never really swam with them he was in a different league. I think he was just deeply unhappy. I think it was 'sod you'. He really wasn't part of that, he wasn't part of the system or he may have signed the big letter in the Guardian but he wasn't a big player really so if it was him I don't think it was part of setting up something else. I don't think he was sufficient...He was unhappy and slightly an odd man anyway. Deeply unhappy. They were, what they were going through it was easier to be just shouted at. They had it beastly and it was their families and they were being shouted at as well.
- PB So the setting up of the solidarity group in '81 replaced the CLD it brought together MPs such as you wouldn't necessarily think to be happy bed fellows people such as Peter Shaw (Peter Shaw very important) Roy Hattersley and Frank field, this might seem like an obvious question to ask but did such differences ever cause such difficulties?
- DH It wasn't, although I was involved no first of all it wasn't by accident they more or less couldn't set it up until they had person that was absolutely keen and Peter Shaw of course was fighting in particularly difficult times in Tower hamlets and having a really rough time. And you know I said it was good to have young people around us and of course David Cowling was all part of that and even then had someone else called Bush. I can't remember, so other than Europe Peter was absolutely understanding of the fight back. So it wasn't that difficult to bring him in. though frankly Europe wasn't on the agenda at that point you know later on you had to change the policy on Europe but in those days it was survival it was about getting the leader, deputy leader and the NEC so we were very focused on stuff like that. I don't think policy issues came up at all.

PB The next question is about the eventual positioning to the centre by the Labour Party by Neil Kinnock throughout the '80s he put the work in to the party and he was helped by the right of the NEC do you think that the defections of '81 were the start of a process that were to see the removal of the ultraism on both sides? Sorry, if you like, the ultra-right on the right the SDP and the militants on the left. Do you think that was like a necessary process in order to get Labour onto that Labour revisionist round, which seemed to be always be a natural state of things.

DH I still don't think it was a necessary condition. I think we need to go to the left you know I think that was non-negotiable if they were not part of the family they were beyond but as John Roper always used to say if you are part of the Labour Party no enemies to the left. You know you were left of everyone else. But we did have to get rid of those, I still think had we had a bit of backbone earlier maybe had Callaghan resigned earlier we could have kept what became of the SDP and still dealt with militants. It's a great what if but maybe we needed a Mrs Thatcher who knows, we needed to get thrashed at the elections before realising what we had to do, it was certainly getting thrashed at the elections that persuaded Neil he had to go further. So it may have been that rather more than twelve other MPs leaving that did it. So the elections probably did it to us.

PB So it helped to focus the minds afterwards. The 1983 election and then it certainly helped focus the mind on the.

DH Not that the party electors don't like you. Move on. So the electorate were going to do it finally. That's it you can't help people out if you're not in power.

PB And the final question which comes about as a Fabian you were known in the SDP who created the Tawney Society.

DH. Oh yes, it didn't last long did it!

PB No it didn't, and I was just wondering do you think the Fabian Society may have moved towards the, and supported the SDP. No. same as ways that no unions would have done.

DH Yes I mean obviously for a day or two when four of our NEC went and then two of my staff their husbands went and for a couple of days it was horrendous. And my lawyer went, he didn't go at all, he didn't go till until a month or two later, he didn't go until the beginning of '82. And Dick Leonard, he wanted SDP members to stay on the Fabians and then he INC said no and then we had the ballot and all of that. So it did become fairly obvious fairly soon that the Fabian executive had and our Fabian members were absolutely solid. I had resignations from, we had the four from the left David Sainsbury and a few others but the fact that I had a very small pile of letters on my desk within days it meant its ok. So I stayed. Interestingly because we had all these intellectuals by Mabel Smith, Peter Townsend, Peter Hall, although Peter did go quite close to them. Colin Crabbe. All these academics and none of them went. Which is really interesting.

PB Again it's a Loyalty isn't it.

DH Yes. And I think when you take it personally I had those lot around me who stayed solid and it didn't half help when you're having a ballot and all of that. Dave Lipsey was brilliant and he was chair at the time and all my staff stayed. Not sure their husbands might have done but all our staff stayed. Really quite quickly it was obvious to me that the Fabians weren't going anywhere.

PB I think with the Fabians staying where the unions sent their leave but nobody knows but with that being in existence like Denis Healey knowing about it and then subsequently Peter Shaw and Roy Hattersley their solidarity that was that front and again a lot of it is quite behind the scenes isn't it but it helped to shore up the support. And it does make you think, we were mentioning the Falklands before and if the Falklands had become earlier say in late 1981 would some of those who defected in '82 have as a result of Roy Jenkins having won Glasgow Hill Head at one point in '82 whether that would have changed the fortunes again. So it's always a question of the event and when they took place.

DH Yes, well the Falklands saved the Labour Party.

PB Yes that's an interesting way of putting it because it finished the SDP.

DH And it was quite interesting because you know because with Syria and ISIS I suddenly thought oh my God it could finish off UKIP because actually in the bigger debates at the moment UKIP is nowhere when ISIS or anything or they sadly beheaded they are suddenly back to old politics. I suddenly thought oh my god it might be something awful like ISIS to suddenly get through and make them stop UKIP. But no the Falklands saved the Labour Party. And of course surprise for the left they did not expect Michael Foot to be.

PB Well no because he was the old fashioned patriot wasn't he at the end of the day. He might have been the romantic unilateralist but he was still a patriot.

DH Again I didn't find the Falklands difficult. It seemed to me if a nasty country walked into your country you had to defend it. It was straightforward.

Appendix Seven

Interview with the Right Honourable the Lord Neil Kinnock of Bedwelty PC

18 November 2012

PB One of the first things I was just going to ask is that you were from the so-called soft left of the party at the time

NK Tribunate left.

PB Tribunate left, yes and you had been very critical of the Wilson Government and the Callahan Government because they were seen at the time as the old revisionist, just maintaining things rather than actually introducing things and actually doing anything because well it was crisis management wasn't it

NK Well, the thing is Jim Callahan's Government for instance he was very definitely introducing devolution and I was against that and the public expenditure regime that they were conducting, I was against that and as it turned out I was right. I didn't know I was right numerically at the time, it was just that when the full figures became available 3 years afterwards I was on the right side of the argument, and with Harold's Government and of course the thing is with both Harold and Jim's Governments they were effectively minority Governments, my view was that whilst there were obvious limitations on what they could do and I accepted them in the same spirit as Michael Foot accepted them, there were never the less ways of applying policy and of advocating change that would have won us more support and given us a better chance of escaping from being a minority and who can say who was right or wrong in that set of circumstances, I simply made the argument.

The other thing was there were conventions of the left, including a Tribune left, some of which I regret. I think the anti-Europeanism was a mistake and that became apparent to me within two years of the referendum and I should have made my move away from that opinion before then. And another convention of course was unilateral nuclear disarmament in which I was a very conditional believer and of course was stuck with it when I became leader. But in a lot of cases I and some people like me maintained the left argument because of our view that the labour party would be corroded, if not endangered, if that Bevanite, Tribune convention wasn't maintained and I'm not saying that as someone who's holier than thou, some people describe it as being guardians of the soul of the party, I think that's stating it much too highly and romantically. My view derived not from a soulful attitude but from a pragmatic view of the general shape of British Politics and of the Labour party.

PB So when it came to 1979, just after the defeat to Margaret Thatcher ...you had the September 79 party conference which was to put it mildly...

NK An utter disaster

PB I was just about to ask what were your recollections of the Parliamentary party because in one of the accounts that I read you felt you were corralled into a separate bit?

NK Oh yeah sure, but I wasn't because I was on the National Executive Committee and in some ways that made it even more appalling as an experience. First of all it was a shouters conference, a ranters conference. Now I'm fairly spirited in the way in which I undertake public speaking, not in any calculated way but because it happens like that, but I hope I'm not a ranter and it was a ranters conference. It was a conference that was playing what George Orwell called the game of 'Fee Fi Fo Fum, I smell the blood of a right-wing deviationist', which is a favourite past-time, or it has been a favourite past-time of the Labour Party and it was a conference which manifested a substantial

chunk of the Labour Party, never a majority but a substantial chunk of the Labour Party departing from reality and its main effect on me was to make me sit up and think what the hell are we doing and a couple of months before I'd accepted the appointment of being Shadow Education Secretary but it was that conference that made me think that unless and until we deal with this chaos and anarchistic attitude, this self-indulgent, infantile leftism, which is what Lenin called it, then we're never going to make any form of appeal to the British Public at all and I suppose without losing a single friendship, partly because there were so many Tribunites who felt, as I discovered, exactly the same way as I did. I started to become somebody engaged in a different kind of politics. That was the effect on me, now what made it so hateful wasn't just the things that I referred to and the massive irresponsibility of it all, but the effect on Jim. Now Jim and I had had quarrels, many quarrels, and many divergences but we always remained friends, not a close comrade like Michael Foot, or even Cledwyn Hughes, but nevertheless I always respected Jim and he was always very kind to me and that went back to the early 60s when I worked my butt off for him in Party South-East. He was driven to despair by that weekend conference, where I think its right to say we must have had a minimum of 3 National Executive meetings, maybe 4, including one on the Thursday where we were deadlocked over the issue of reforming the election of the leadership of the party

PB Was this the Bishop's Stortford...

NK No, I didn't go to Bishop Stortford very, very deliberately and Bishop Stortford, I think it came after the conference, yes I'm pretty certain it did, but as we walked in I went into the Hotel, The Imperial in Blackpool I think it was, and as we walked in Jim said to me 'I'm going to resign at this meeting' and I said For Christ's sake Jim don't do that, you'll make a catastrophic situation even worse. Now I know why you want to, in your position I would want to but please don't do it, don't let them force you into that kind of

submission. Now I don't know if it was me, or Michael Foot, or Denis Healey or whoever it was who talked him out of it or his instinct got him out of it but he didn't resign thank god, but he was very, very close to it and it was a searing experience. I went home from that conference very miserable indeed.

PB You were talking about the leadership discussions that they were having in terms of how they were going to elect the leader and that was discussed at Bishop Stortford. Denis Healey refers to Bishop Stortford as the crystallisation of when those who were thinking of leaving from the right, that was the breaking point. Both Jim Callahan and Michael Foot tried to persuade the members of the Commission at Bishop Stortford not to go for ittrying to keep the party together. And as you were saying Jim Callahan did everything that he could in order to try and prevent this from happening and yet this was still seen as a reason, according to Denis Healey, why Shirley Williams, Bill Rodgers and David Owen were to leave. You were highly critical at the time of those who wanted to leave but mentioning what you were saying before your own experiences do you looking back now have sympathy for those...

NK No, none at all. You see what I always think of is what people like Denis Healy and Roy Hattersley did even though I know that Roy for instance has always in essentials been in the best tradition of the left of the party. His associations, without being synthetic at all were with what was called the Right of the party because he was pro-European, because he wasn't a unilateralist, because he made the argument for incomes policy, all those kinds of things but in terms of his utter belief in a more egalitarian society and a greater sense of justice and the enablement of people and emancipation I discovered over the years that in some respects he was to the left of me and Healey was irreverence on legs, there was nothing right-wing about Denis but they were associated in the way in which these pretty inadequate definitions had developed more by commentators than participants that's the plague of politics I

suppose, they were part of that group. It didn't occur to them for one millisecond that the answer to the woes and afflictions and weaknesses of the Labour Party lay in them getting out of the Labour Party. And the fact is if Denis and Roy and people like them had gone, the division would have been irreparable and the Labour Party in my view would not have recovered because that would have taken it to an entirely different dimension. I think Denis is right about certainly the timing of the gestation of the desire to first of all I think to live alongside the Labour Party and then to depart entirely from it. I think their decision was partly arrogance, partly delusion, partly frustration, partly laziness. Now I say laziness because it would take a hell of a lot more to stay and fight their corner and make their argument than to cut loose. They didn't really have the spirit, the determination, in the end the affection or the belief in the Labour Party to do that. They took refuge in the view that this isn't the labour party I joined. It's never the bloody labour party you joined, that's called History, time moves on and the problem with the bloody party is in many ways it was the Labour Party that they joined, it hadn't moved enough and one of the consequences of that was an ideas vacuum which was then filled disastrously by Bennery and you know if they had stayed and taken it on properly ok it would have meant civil war but we had that in any case and it would have maintained a broadly based politics in the labour party so we had to do it the hard way. But you know I really do think that it wasn't just treachery or justified frustration or a sense of isolation, a sense of being persecuted that's.....as well and it wasn't entirely paranoia, I mean some were the object of real animosity and persecution but as I say don't leave out laziness as one of the components of the fuel that drove them out of the party

PB Why do you think it was in 1981 when the defections happened ...tensions back then....problems that were happening in the local constituency parties. Why do you think they chose that particular moment?

NK Well, the cumulative circumstances, there was the '79 conference, there was Bishop's Stortford, there was the wrangling over an issue which those who were opposed to a more democratic system for the election of the Party thought would become a mortal affliction. They were very fearful of the whole process of selection and deselection and of course they had been, several of them, protected by union favouritism and I mean that happened to an extent on the left as well but it meant that they'd had politically less demanding lives than is desirable, I mean nobody wants to have to fight every inch of the way. So the year of 1980 was a year of accumulating tension, division, argument, quarrels, in every forum, in the PLP, in the NEC, in the tearoom, everywhere. Battle lines were drawn up, the campaign route, the rank and file mobilising committee of, god, it makes me nauseous just bloody remembering those days, it was so bloody miserable. The only happy things happening to me were the performance of the Welsh team and my kids that was about it you know. If it hadn't been for holidays I'd have jumped under a train, anyway it was awful and I sort of went blow by blow through it with Michael who constantly argued of course for calm, for comradeship, for unity, for cohesion in the party and then eventually of course Jim did resign which was inevitable and Michael, against my view, my strong view, and against his preference, he never wanted to be leader of the party, was elected. Some say he was elected with the votes of Social democratic revolutionary pessimists, the Samson tendency who pull the temple down.

PB There does appear to be some proof of that....

NK Yes, but impossible to prove, all I know is if they did that they did Michael no favours that's for certain but if Denis had won, much as I loved him, the fractures would have turned into major cracks and compound wounds. It couldn't have been maintained, the form of unity that Michael's sheer spirit managed to maintain because Denis would have lost his rag without taking precaution of organising at a microscopic level to get

his own way. You know I would have backed him, I wouldn't have been quarrelling with him, but you know I was by no means a major force then. So by the time the chaos of the 1980 conference which was even bloody worse than 1979, even worse. Had produced the Wembley conference and the Wembley conference took place, the knowledge that at least there would be a formal organisation within the Labour Party at least, was pretty matter of fact. Those who thought they'd split away were in the minority, they didn't include me. I just thought that people like Shirley, the only one of the gang about whom I'd say this people like Shirley were just too bloody Labour to leave and of course she did hesitate and I pleaded with her in the National executive Committee not to take this course but they did so the reason it happened in 1981 was the accumulation of events going back into maybe '77, certainly the defeat in '79

PB Denis Healey was elected as Deputy Leader by a very narrow margin, I think you were canvassing for John Silkin at the time...his votes were expected to go across to Tony Benn and everyone was to abstain. That was considered to be the point which saved the Labour party because he was elected as Deputy Leader.

NK There's no doubt about that.

PB Do you think there was a need to have Denis as Deputy Leader in order to maintain a link with the right?

NK Oh yes, it wasn't just that. In the course of a year Denis had proved to be a pretty loyal Deputy to Michael, not immaculately so but it's politics after all, but certainly more than a lot of people anticipated and creditably. Secondly, Denis is intellectually and physically a political stalwart which is bloody useful and thirdly in the event of any threatened departures the first conversation was naturally with him and so you know he was a balancing deputy. Now, you said I was campaigning for Silkin, I'll go into the detail of that because it's fascinating. Benn as you know announced at 3 o'clock in the

morning, and I think it was the 3rd April, that he was going to run for the deputy leadership. We'd had a meeting in the tribune group on the Monday evening considering this possibility that he was going to do it, hoping that he wasn't because the overwhelming majority of the tribune group were against the graphic divisions that would be provoked by having a completely unnecessary deputy leadership contest. A lot of the tribune group were also very suspicious of Benn because he'd only joined the tribune group only days before, that recently ok, and when he made his announcement the dismay amongst a lot of people in the tribune group was evident. So we had another meeting and it was strongly condemnatory of Benn's action and he wasn't there, he didn't turn up. I came to realise that this was a characteristic of Benn's. Anyway, the argument went on and Eric Heffer said he was willing to put himself forward. I said this is bloody mad. We can't go around denouncing somebody for provoking division by running for an unnecessary contest and at the same time run a candidate. So I'm entirely against us having a candidate of any kind and people like Kevin McNamara and Jeff Hooker and a few others agreed with me. But we didn't form the majority there was a general acquiescence you couldn't say there was a vote in favour, there wasn't. Acquiescence that Eric should be the standard bearer of the Left. I then said ok, fine what if Eric gets knocked out and only Michael, Healey and Benn are left, what do we do then? Do we then vote for the person who provoked the bloody division and there was silence. So off went Heffer to his constituents in Walton already being infiltrated heavily by the militant and he announced to his GC that he was going to run and instead of acclamation they said no you're bloody not. Nobody's to run against Tony Benn so he came back on the Monday to the tribune meeting with his tail between his legs. We've now moved into the second week in April and at that meeting the argument went on that well if Heffer couldn't or wouldn't run, decided on reconfiguration, da,dee,da,dee,da, didn't want to be part of the division, there was a lot in what Neil had said da, dee, da, dee and of course we all bloody knew that his

legs had been cut from under him by his own constituency party. So then Silkin put himself forward as far as I was concerned the same argument went on and as far as I was concerned there should never be anybody it should have been a straight contest from day one. Where everybody would have to make up their minds. As the summer went on and the whole bloody movement was driven by divisions it became more and more and more clear to me that I wasn't going to vote for Denis because he was from the right of the party, I'd had a big quarrel with him over public expenditure and he took a different line on defence, all those kind of things but at the same time it was bloody impossible for me to vote for Benn. So eventually I resolved my quandary by writing a long article in the Tribune, I wrote it on holiday actually in a place called....in Tuscany and in between fooling around with the kids, and swimming and going to see Florence and Sienna for the first time in my life which was wonderful, I wrote this piece. And I was provoked into writing it by things that Scargill had said the week before we went on holiday and I thought they had to be answered. And so I wrote it as an answer to that and in the course of doing it announced my intention to vote for Silkin, then abstain and to ask other people to do the same thing and of course it was the abstentions that stopped them and there were two consequences of that : First, I attracted the utter fury of the Bennite left, a fella tried to beat me up, I was spat on, all kinds of things and there were 30 pieces of silver given to me in the Tribune. It just showed how infantile the left is and was in my point of view. But as I was sitting there on the stage waiting for the result I thought 'why the hell didn't I vote for Healey?' I felt strong enough in my detestation of what Benn had done and the consequences of what he'd done to chuck him out of the party, I mean I loathed and detested everything that ever happened. I thought bloody hell why didn't I vote for Healey because if I and a few others had that would have put it beyond question. When the result came in 0.6, Jesus Christ...and the extraordinary thing was that when the result was read by a man called Idwell Edwards from North Wales, from....., a friend of mine, of course Benn was read first

and the first word was Forty and I thought thank Christ for that. But until Healey's result had been read out the Bennites didn't realise they had been beaten, because they thought it was impossible for them to be beaten and so they were just stunned and then they started to scream and all the rest of it and my first thought was Christ, you saved the Labour Party and then I was whisked away from the platform to go for a Panorama interview with Scargill where we had one of the best fights there has ever been on television, no punches pulled, no prettiness at all and it was cathartic for me and that week was cathartic because of the reactions and the threats and all the rest of it and my own constituency party had voted by a majority of one to vote for Tony Benn and the one included my agent Barry Moore who was a marvellous, decent fella, one of my students from the WEA who went to University and tragically died as a young man, he was only 45 when he died, but Barry and I were the best of comrades, we were really tight, and he voted for them, which amazed me but of course he was the one different. He got to the conference, he watched what was going on and he broke his mandate and voted for Healey. So you know all those things were going on and so it wasn't so much campaigning for Silkin, I didn't give one minute to campaigning for John. It was anything we could do to stop Benn short of voting for Denis and I realised as I said as the votes were being counted I was a bloody idiot not to have voted for Healey

PB When you became leader of the Labour Party in 1983 you began the process of making the party appear moderate in the eyes of the voters ...painful process. Do you think that the defections of the SDP members was part of a wider process whereupon it made the party moderate on all levels finishing with the expulsion of Militant Tendency.

NK Their defection made my job much more difficult and of course if they hadn't defected the chances are that Shirley would have been elected in the 1983 election and would have been elected leader I think it was pretty much guaranteed but they did defect and

they certainly seriously wounded us in the election, results show that, and it left the party in a weakened state in the wake of an appalling election result, crucified Michael of course and that's the party I was left with. Secondly and much, much more important was the fact that the task I knew I had to undertake of changing the policy and in some respects, certainly not all, some respects the personality of the party was made much more difficult because some of the tracks that I knew we'd have to tread were similar to those trodden by the SDP and I would have to work in a way and over a long period of time that enabled me to rebut convincingly the allegation that I was aping the SDP and I didn't prevent it, Heffer's favourite taunt was 'Kinnock has turned the party into an SDP #2 but by the time he was saying that I'd made enough moves and people in the party had felt enough relief to keep on moving in that direction but it took longer than it should have and longer than it would have if they hadn't defected. Now that's the truth

PB You were mentioning about Eric Heffer's jibe about the SDP #2 and you said about trying not to be seen as aping any of the moderate policies. Do you think there were any of the policies that the SDP put forward in their manifestos were later encompassed by New Labour?

NK But the SDP weren't New Labour. The SDP was the social-Democratic wing when such definitions made a difference of the Labour party, that's the reality. Whereas New Labour proved to be an effort to dis-invent and reinvent the Labour party and I think politically with pretty damaging results in policy terms in getting power and using it in Health, in Education, in combatting poverty, in Commercial Development, in Social Legislation – all great pluses. All the actions of an authentic Labour Government but it was the conduct, the body language, the company kept by New Labour that meant that by 2005 the New Labour enthusiasts could justifiably be thought of as people who were not consistent with the purposes and nature of the Labour Party. Whereas, when the

SDP contended that they were still real Labour they were certainly 80% right which of course in some ways again made my task more difficult because I had to get the authentic Labour Party to move away from policies and in many ways more important attitudes which had developed in the years before 1983. So I wouldn't say that there's a link between the SDP and New Labour, their policy overlaps and means of expression and quite naturally Roy Jenkins was an enthusiast for New Labour, it would be abnormal if he wasn't but the perception I have of the Social Democrats made them a part of Labour and the perception I have of New Labour, the utter enthusiasts of New Labour, not everybody associated, it's far from that, I want to emphasise that, the utter enthusiasts were a departure from Labour as a real alternative party and purpose in a three party democracy. I think in losing the distinctiveness, we gained some votes but I think probably more people drifted or stayed away, certainly in 2010, and 2005 actually. The turnout for us in 2005 was pathetic.

PB Eric Heffer considered the defection of the SDP members as a good thing as he said it was...out of the way. Roy Hattersley and many of those on the right such as Giles Radice as well were scathing. Roy Hattersley said he would never forgive them Giles Radice and Bill Rodgers didn't speak to each other for about 10 years. Do you think now that time has passed there will ever be the possibility and what the reaction might be for David Owen, for example to return back to the party

NK Yes, I think there's a possibility. I think its likely age will get in the way and habit. He's the only one of the three survivors who might come back and part of the reason for that is he detached himself from the Liberal Democrats. Shirley and Bill are still very much part of that. Shirley much more active than Bill obviously and I suppose if you press them they would say We made a big change once in our lives, we can't do it twice and we're used to being in a new circle of friends who share our unchanged values and I'm not quite a contemporary of theirs but I'm 70 this year and I said quite

a long time ago let bygones be bygones because they were plain nasty to me, they betrayed the Party that I love and I said some pretty vicious things about them very deliberately. Maybe Roy was even more bloody savage but I really got stuck into him. The years passed, you know if we can coexist happily with people that we fought twice in 25 years well there's not much difficulty to associate now. I mean they are the people I go for a drink with but we're pleasant to each other. I just wish that given the Coalition Government and the action that it's taking, people whose origins were in the Labour Party would be more critical, more publically. I think they owe it to themselves in some way but they're not, that might change and I think probably will change but so far it hasn't while the Coalition has been doing, in my view, some really dreadful things in their area of concern Health Service, Welfare system ...families, those things effectively squashing the alternative vote or even the real embarkation of ...they've had plenty of reasons to reassert their reason for being in politics and they haven't done it.

Appendix Eight

Interview with Paul McHugh, Cambridge, 15 January 2016

PB Your own recollections of the mood within the movement and the local party after the 1979 general election?

PM I wasn't in the Labour Party in 1979 and haven't been at all I've been a Labour voter through the '70s. I think I have probably always managed to vote Labour. So I can't comment on how the election defeat in '79 went down. Amongst Labour I was pretty gutted but and so much of '80 I can't remember much of sequence of events I could easily mug them up but when the lion has declaration issues it's beyond me. But I can remember when I began personally to respond to the split in the Labour Party. I could see it coming and I really felt it was a huge mistake to try to set up a leadership party which was cut off from the Labour Party which roots by the way I don't belong to I'm a Liverpool low middle class catholic so you can hardly say I'm steeped in Labour tradition but by '79 I was clear at that stage that the left needed to remain at one with the trade unions and co-ops and so and I just didn't see the gang of four making it. So in '81 the first thing I remember doing I helped out in east Chesterton at the county council elections and I remember asking myself who got me to do that and it's just possible it's Simon Cedric Jowell who you will know of who is now sadly dead. Who was possibly in the Labour Party before me, perhaps not that much before me anyway someone got me to go and knock up and canvas and in East Chesterton and the candidate was John Perkus who was an OU tutor and I might have known him through the OU so it might just have been friendship and I quite enjoyed that, I have to say, and this was May '81 and the mood was perfectly ok you know and I remember the committee being run by a young bloke who seemed to have his eye on the ball, full of

enthusiasm, we lost but that was not unusual in East Chesterton so ok, that was my appetizer, now perhaps you can remind me when the Limehouse Declaration was?

PB January 1981

PM Ok, so that would be the back drop of the SDP then what happened in Cambridge is, at the end of the year there was a by election in Romsey and of course this was the worst possible time to have a bye election, looking back it was snowing that day it was just awful. And the SDP fought it and they had...there and I did turn out for that and Simon who lived in...I didn't know, he had something to do with that and the candidate was a good friend of mine Len Freeman who had been active for much, much longer and it was an eye opener really because the SDP threw everything into Romsey if your read the camaraderie of the history of the Cambridge Labour Party they had had an iron grip on Romsey since 1918. And it was a symbolic bye election. I think there was enough Labour activists out I recall there being, this is when I first came across Mark Todd who later became leader of Cambridgeshire county council and became a Labour MP in 1997. I don't think we were short of knockers up but everything was against us including the weather and you just couldn't persuade people to go out and vote because it was slippery under foot and the Labour vote and I think in that political stage in Romsey the Labour vote was quite an elderly vote. And people said oh well you'll win anyway wont you, meanwhile and I was very struck by this the SDP seemed to have large numbers of people on the ground and actually in cars and I remember seeing Volvo estates in Romsey. So we lost the Romsey bye election. And that made me decide to join the Labour Party because I thought what the Labour Party does not want to do is lose the middle classes, it's a progressive alliance, I imagine I'm a fully paid up card carrying member so I joined in the beginning of '82 and how do you join the Labour Party?

I found out where there would be a batch meeting, I lived in Victoria park off Victoria road and one of my neighbours, I'd lived there about a year and a half Diane Phillips was it turned out was the treasurer of the local Labour Party so January '82 I found myself going to my first branch meeting in (what is) now known as Rowan road in Cambridge and it was the pretty home of Dr. Julian Hunt who was a fellow of Trinity had been a county councillor, had been a governor at Chesterton community college, I was to be governor many years later on, and later went to London and became astronomer Royal, lord hunter Chesterton and the father of young Tristan. I don't know when Tristan was born but I remember there being kids around the house so it may well be that if he was born before '82 I was seeing Tristan Hunt going to bed so that was it. And it was quite an engaging branch a number of interesting people and there was a strong antipathy to the SDP, I think the branch, it was a middle class area, the branch members were activists who had been confronted with the SDP and the possibility to join them had decided not to do so, so they were pretty hostile, not personally hostile but there was a strong feeling that it was a dead end and it wasn't the way to go and I think people were much of a muchness really. What I would call Hattersleyite social democrats. Croslandite, yes cause cross was dead and she was alive. And in view of the public service and power of the state who make things better for people and you know a feeling of...looking after those less well off than yourself. At that stage west Chesterton ward had been a Tory stronghold for a long long time. And I'm always surprised when I look at the electoral results in Cambridge which of course now is easily available thanks to the work of two liberal democrats and you do find that Labour do bizarrely wins but we all felt that Labour had never won in west Chesterton not true. The memory had faded you see and we had no chance and the liberals were steaming up and I think possibly in '82 it might have been the first election I was involved in west Chesterton. The liberals actually won and defeated the Tories, bit of a blow to them it's a general process in which the Tories were evicted from Cambridge.

They had a chap called Percy Read who ran a big hair salon in town, Maurice Garner who was the clerk to another important tory Paddy Crossman who was a solicitor and Christopher Cross Goodman who I never quite figured out but he had a salmon pink rolls Royce and came up to see us from Queen Edith from time to time. The liberals gradually evicted these guys, we were on the fringes fighting the good fight putting up candidates who gamely did it to keep the votes up and helping the general election and I have been that person myself on a number of occasions and actually contributing to the Labour Party in Cambridge, the Cambridge Labour Party has a number of wards and the centre which has lots of members who are reasonably well off and they contribute funds, go to fund raising dinners and so on and has water on the periphery and fewer members but who are traditional Labour voters. That was then, I'm aware things may now be just so. So you are interested in the actions of the SDP. I think there was considerable general hostility to the SDP without not trying to make it personal, my boss in those days Steve Marshall was the head of humanities which became deputy vice chancellor at Anglia Ruskin, he was a very good guy, he left the Labour Party in, from his point of view in the spur and we always got on ok, I ran against him once and he won and the other important SDP guy about was Peter Clark who was a distinguish political historian worked on the liberals and the term of the twentieth Century and eventually became master of trinity hall. And he was a prominent member of the SDP. I don't think that any of them had been especially active in the Labour Party and the Cambridge Labour Party wasn't badly split and from memory I think the one Labour Councillor Gwyneth Lipstein who defected, the others remained solid.

I mean people left the Labour Party and then banged on about it there was someone or other and I got an angry statement from a chap called Paddy Gagham, who denounced the Labour Party as middle class and homosexual loving and so on but I doubt, Paddy was right wing Labour and was cheesed off with something that had

happened. I don't think the Cambridge Labour Party lost any hugely significant people and that was important in not getting too stressed about the SDP.

PB That's interesting because you mention the right wing Labour member that you revered to, were there any fears in the party at the time that had been going on in the '70s obviously you said you joined in '81, were there any ongoing fears at the time or resentments at the time such as entryism such as the trots as they called them

PM Not at the time, in the early '80s I don't think militant was at all significant at a mid-eighties phenomenon but members of the SDP believed that their perception of Labour was that it was either in the hands of and they characterised unions as dinosaur unions looking backwards or mad trots but I saw no evidence of mad trots in Cambridge Militants weren't an issue. Take the Miners' Strike I began to see militant things so at the hall, some young guys who I suspect were Cambridge under graduates who banged on about it but actually it's not been a great problem or issue.

PB Ok for the two lodestars for the reasons for a lot of the acrimony as well from the SDP perspective was Europe and the issue of unilateralism were they bones of contention in the Cambridge party as well.

PM Right. Europe wasn't I can't remember Europe being dates in the early eighties at all. It doesn't mean a resolution might have been passed in the absence of mine and for all I know the party might have been committed to getting out in the early '80s but it wasn't a key issue and nobody in the Cambridge Labour Party passed a resolution as a problem less than they used to on all sorts of things and you have to be reminded about a policy on the matter. Europe wasn't an issue really. So what else?

PB Unilateralism.

PM Unilateralism. Yes I think we are always a unilateralist party, during the 80's I'm sure we did commit ourselves to resolutions to unilateralism. One of the things which I know bothered the people of Cambridge is the proximity to Molesworth my party was basing on Christmas isles and I can remember taking one of my kids on a double decker bus on a picnic in Molesworth and there were lots of Labour people there. But CND in the early eighties was such a huge ...lots of people worked on the CND that weren't seen in the Labour Party and they might be members and might suddenly vote Labour but they were absorbed by the business of organising huge CND rallies in Cambridge.

PB You mentioned before those activists who left when you were still trying to keep on good terms with them, did you feel sympathies for the MPs at the time and how some of the other CND members were feeling and the activists were feeling and the pressures they said they felt. Did you feel sympathy towards them or did you think why don't you stay and fight.

PM Well there were some back bench SDP members in London and two of them and Douglas Mann resigned and fought and lost a by-election and I don't know whether I had sympathy at the time but with the benefit of hindsight I am sympathetic to them being a small membership Labour Party and suddenly having these painful guys banging on about them. The gang of four I have no sympathy for at all I thought they people with exactly their believes like Denis Healey and Roy Hattersley were staying and fighting and I really did not think that they should go so I was pretty hostile and hugely angry and pretty hostile to the four of them.

PB And one of the things that have been contended is that because of the nature of the party at the time it needed a leader from the left that perceived left of the party to lead it which is the reason why some members of the parliamentary party cause it was still the old system voted for Michael Foot, Denis Healey and Roy Hattersley also

contended that and it did come out afterwards that some of them voted for Michael Foot in order to give them an excuse to leave. Do you think that if Denis Healey had won that the situation would have been considerably different from a local perspective?

PM Denis Healey wouldn't have been a problem for the Cambridge Labour Party, the nature of the Cambridge Labour Party is that leading members would have quite have respected Denis Healey's campaigning ability and intellect he was a very attractive candidate, he wouldn't have posed any problem had he been on the left but he would have been more on the right because I thought we were a soft unilateralist party I doubt that we would have collectively got on a high horse about Denis Healey Unilateralism we would have found away round like the Labour Party did from then on. So no I think Healey victory would probably have been deplored by most members and then they would live with it.

PB So conversely then at the election of Michael Foot was seen as something to be welcomed?

PM I can't remember and there I think I would be speaking the benefit of hindsight, I can't remember whether Michael Foot was looked upon as someone who was going to lead us to disaster which he did and what a pity whether support for him as a great guy a great writer and a great intellect but I can't dredge that one up I'm afraid.

PB And therefore afterwards there was the great battle for the deputy leadership between Healey and Benn. Now that is an area where it's been contended again that Healey had lost that one. And he very nearly did. That would have created huge problems for the party at the time. Because there were many who saw Benn as a device figure. Do you think it was the thing that saved Labour, as some have contended, that because Healey became the deputy to Foot that that was one of the turning points that Giles Radice said it prevented further defections.

PM I'm speaking with the benefit of hindsight in saying yes, at the time I had no particular hostility to Tony Benn and rather more sceptical about it now even though he's dead and therefore he's almost god like. But at the time I don't remember feeling particularly hostile toward him. I preferred Healey to Benn but it didn't see it as dramatically. I think Charles Radice is probably right. Michael would have spent all his time calming Benn and the Bennites down. It would have been pretty difficult.

PB And also something that you mentioned before. You were talking about the party at the CLP in Cambridge as being Croslandites in many respects almost social liberal, do you think that the social liberal strand in the Labour Party affected or damaged because of the association not the brand I don't like using that phrase but the strain of thought also being associated with Roy Jenkins he being seen.

PM No I don't think so. I don't think people like me were given a hard time at all. I think there is always a sort of rye or respectfulness between the core wards full of and hard liberals and the outer liberals and that for working class activists. One of the strengths the working party did have of guys, mostly guys who were plainly working class trade unionists and effective councillors, people like Peter Cowl and...and there's just a residue of that in trade unions now who does its own thing in terms of organisations and gets people out of the Labour and none of us can quite figure out how they do it but they do. So I don't think that the progressive liberal side of the party felt betrayed by the gang of one therefore more awkward. I can see that some areas that might be the case. Why don't you go they've gone Baring in mind that the balance of power in the Cambridge party was probably evenly split. There were plenty of liberals and social democrats around. Not to feel too isolated.

PB Considering the eventual positioning towards the central drought throughout the '80s. do you think that 1981 was the start of the defections and the creation of the SDP was

part of a process that that was seen as a corrective process which also lead to the expulsion of militants do you think it was sort of the party themselves, they might not have thought of it direct but it was part of a process that they obviously saw that they needed in order to.

PM This is the Lib Dem argument that the Lib Dems were necessary to Labour Party to clean itself up, yes. No I don't buy that. I think that the British left was appallingly damaged by the defection of the SDP and the greater and power ones of the liberals when they found their allies with the liberal democrats. And it's taken us till now in the mire of defeat to Lib Dems to back to where the liberals were in the late '70s. I'm an old fashioned socialist guy and would much have preferred the Labour Party to have carried on and to have won the 1983 election. Which I think could perfectly well have happened. If they had not split and some people forget how unpopular Thatcher was. At the time when all this was happening. And this assumption that the victory of the Falklands was bound to win I think is debatable. But that's counter factual history.

PB Radice contends that New Labour in many respects was on classic Godesberg Social Democrat and some of the things they said would not have looked out of place the Social Democrats said in New Labour. And David Owen also contended that the New Labour was the SDP. Do you see that the case in a separate development?

PM I think that the most significant think about New Labour was it determination to avoid being defeated. It was anything for wining really and I don't think the SDP's departure was an influence on that. The SDP departure made the Labour a losing party for thirteen years. That's true. But true intellectual Labour policy was a determination not to put a foot out of place and victory at all costs. And the Labour Party today is trying to understand where it is going in reaction to that. I am not very tolerant of the Lib Dem or the SDP argument. That you guys wouldn't be where you are today. If we hadn't

have pulled out. Well indeed not we might have been in a better place a Denis Healey Government in the '80s wouldn't have been a bad thing for Britain certainly better than a thatcher Government.

Appendix Nine

Interview with Austin Mitchell MP, 4 November 2014

PB Before and after the 1979 general election and it's asking about your own recollections and the mood within the labour movement at the time. The mood and the bitterness.

AM Well, I couldn't understand it really because there was certainly a bitterness on behalf of the left because the government certainly hadn't done what they wanted they had ruled more in the interest of the big business and the United States than they wanted which was a folly really because that government had struggled to hold the post war settlement together as it had done so with the incomes policy and maintaining the welfare state standards up and when economic circumstances were against us as they were and it had won through because certainly things were reviving by 1979. It would have been better if Jim had hung back and stopped the election in retrospect he should have done. As it was to go in October when there was such bitterness in the air and we hadn't suffered the collapse of the incomes policy and the rebellion of the trade unions who behaved stupidly and betrayed us. Things would have been very different. Judgement rather than misgovernment would pay the price for that and anger was exacerbated by a kind of infiltration by militants wasn't really a serious threat but a nuisance and by the determination of the left to bind the poisoner of the constitutional reforms as a way of getting the political change they wanted. Also constitutional reforms conference would decide policy and reselection of MPs leadership election by the party. Jim effectively gave way at the conference. Clive Jenkins played a part.

PB Is that the Commission of Enquiry?

AM No, there was a big meeting at Bishop's Stortford in face of the onslaught Jim just gave up, and stood down which of course ceded the case really. There was a moment of fatalistic despair on behalf of the party particularly MPs saw themselves under threat of deselection and a feeling on the part of the right that basic policies like defence nuclear weapons on the American side were threatened. This caused them to organise and fight back and caused those with any port in a storm to jump ship. The clincher was the '81 conference when there was an emergency conference. I remember putting David Lord who at that time was the leader of the labour party and he was horrified it was so insane and so was I, so it was that conference that produced the defection of the big four. Rodgers was always the most loath to leave the party but I said to Shirley Williams don't go but Roy Jenkins was going to find a new destiny to wreck the labour party and form a new party. Shirley Williams was naive. Rodgers hesitantly concerned about defence but more about Europe in the sense he saw this anti Europe mood developing and labour committed against EU membership, which was never really fought and Hattersley resisted them. They were committed Europeans especially Jenkins, they defected, they were immediately joined by a number of older MPs and right wing MPs who were threatened with deselection. Indeed it was argued that some of them had voted for Michael Foot as leader in order to wreck the party but I don't know whether that is true. I think this might be true of one or two, that's a bit too cunning for most of them, as they were just frightened creatures. They reformed an organisation called Solidarity, I was treasurer for a while. Peter Shore and Roy Hattersley were in charge to keep the party together.

PB Do you think when the SDP left, that it affected the social liberal elements of the Liberal Party?

AM I don't think so it certainly strengthened the left and there were certainly more numerous and remained so. The group Solidarity which combated them was really

pretty moderate in its policies. Ours was Michael Foot, a traditional lefty of course he accepted the majority of the parties decision and moved to the centre ground you can only rise from the centre ground if nothing changes at all.

I think it was for a time the strength of the trade unions for the party but they were weakened by Thatcherism and the destruction of the basic industries. Oddly enough they became much more enthusiastic about Europe before any other party. They all came over in '87 and spoke at the conference and told them all the wonderful things Europe would do for them. Downing Street was totally deaf to the trade unions and hostile. The GMB went from being anti Europe to Pro European and that I think pushed the party in the same direction. And I think they did make us aware the need to stop the left taking over that fizzled anyway they were quite easily defeated. In fact they disappeared I remember one of the solidarity thing was to hit out at both sides. The defectors fought but we didn't need to fight all that hard. Militant discredited themselves and the fiasco in Liverpool helped in that direction. In Grimsby they disappeared from the scene. Just like snow melting, they had been coming along to labour party meetings and moving all sorts of insane resolutions like MPs should live in a council house on the Willows estate, what kind of hostility would that induce. They never got anywhere, as I think people didn't take them seriously and nationally the fight was very bitter. I don't know what the situation was in Liverpool but it was messy. The party moved left anyway.

When the SDP left, it weakened the social mobility of the labour party and changed the ethos of the Labour Party substantially, after with being against Europe before. Before the SDP left, it was eliminated after they had gone. That would have happened anyway as well and I think you know a self- correcting mechanism which didn't allow to operate they just threw up their hands in despair. It is an unrealistic view how parties' work as it is slow and long term and you cannot preach to them and suddenly shock

horror I'm pissing off, it's just like Cameron you can't piss off. And they were maligned cause Jenkins I believe if you read Campbell's biography he wasn't coming back to the Labour Party because he couldn't be leader and I think Williams is a bit naive. What I most admire Bill Rodgers, he felt he was being overruled as Defence Minister, Defence spokesman in opposition and being a great managerialist, so he left. He wasn't going to get very far in the Labour Party. So his ego and ambition as well as ideology.

PB You became MP for Grimsby after the passing of Tony Crosland you were described at the time as a Gaitskellite.

AM I am still a Gaitskellite.

PB David Marquand said that Crosland wouldn't have joined the SDP because it was not a Crosland party. Do you think he would have stayed?

AM Nobody thinks that what I say he loved the labour party and he was really sceptical on Europe, he never gave a firm lead to the labour party either for or against it. The Europeans were a bit baffled that he wasn't more supportive. He wouldn't have liked our position on defence and unilateralism but he saw it has more the instrument of the kind of society he wanted. Historically looking back these breakaways never succeed. He would have been very clear on that. By the stage if had lived Jenkins in Campbell's book said they were lovers physically at Oxford. And were rivals didn't trust each other and would have been reluctant to accept Jenkins as leader. He would have trusted Rodgers but he thought Shirley was barmy and she was, I think that is just wishful thinking.

AM Marquand went and I'm not sure if he came back on not.

PB He went over to Brussels as well and fought the bye elections in Ashford.

AM He is a narcissist really but brilliant, he officiated by his pro Europeanism and Crosland did not feel that, he was always cool and sceptical of Europe. On the one hand it's ok and the other hand why bother it's a problem. I don't think people would have bothered either if he had gone. Well me as a Gaitskell, as well as Gaitskell spent all his time holding the party together as did Harold Wilson what if Gaitskell had gone to the SDP, I doubt that he would have taken a firm position on Europe, he had also taken a firm decision on defence, I would have agreed but, there were three policies on defence Europe and eco and the other way up of which of those three would have affected who ego wouldn't have counted on Crosland's part nor with Europe same to of Gaitskell had he lived. So I think all these retrospective things, some would have joined and some would not look at Roy Hattersley who is much more passionate about Europe and is much more Europe than Crosland

PB Tribalism?

AM Sorry, well there is that too. Crosland wouldn't have had tribalism he just liked the party I'm sorry if there is more you want to achieve ...but Europe would have pulled into them. As probably would defence. So I don't see it as a I see the friendship between them the similarity between them is the reason they stayed and did stay.

Appendix Ten

Interview with the Right Honourable the Lord Giles Radice PC, 28 November 2012

PB What are your own recollections of the mood within the party at the time both before and after the 1979 General Election, both as a member of the PLP and during CLP meetings in your constituency?

GR In a way it was a shocking defeat, not that we didn't know that we were going to lose, it was just that the circumstances of losing were awful. If you think back to September/October 78 we were level pegging in the polls, there was a feeling that Healey had done a good job as Chancellor, he was being called one of the best Chancellors at the time. Jim had been an unexpectedly good Prime Minister as he hadn't been a good Chancellor or Foreign Secretary.

PB He was a good chairman.

GR He was a very good chairman. So to be in the situation were in we got to February and having got through the Winter of Discontent which basically destroyed us. I obviously blame trade unionists and the shop stewards but I above all I blame Jim Callaghan, and Denis Healey and Michael Foot, the old men who were in charge. We young ones, when asked, said where shall we go now? You know, what were they going for five percent? It was a bit too much and provided a sort of *locus belli* for shop stewards and insurrectionists to beat against. So it was a disaster and we could that quite quickly was destroying our argument for governing and how we could get on with the unions.

PB The Social Contract had been under Wilson.

GR Yes and we'd been relatively successful particularly in the last couple of years and people Jack Jones had worked their butts out to help us and suddenly it didn't look

viable method any longer in the broader sense. We looked a divided and demoralised party with ministers who didn't know what to do. And then we were defeated and then recriminations started and my God did when they started! There was the Conference of 79 and I can't remember what was passed there...

PB There was the Commission of Enquiry agreed there...

GR The Commission of Enquiry which didn't look very good news. The right in a sense was blamed because it was said the right 'you'd been in power and look where you led us'. T Benn realised this was his opportunity and he was absolutely amazing in his objective as he whizzed about all over the country and appeared to be offering an alternative, even if most of it was *chimera* but he did seem offering an economic policy, the AES, the Alternative Economic Strategy which was actually, basically 'Socialism in One Country' as it was based on import controls and all this kind of thing, which wasn't really viable in this modern world.

PB Especially as we were members of the then Common Market?

GR Yes and of course also we were on a world market, Globalism had already started! But then you added to that he had a party constitutional agenda which was certainly quite plausible, indeed one member one vote which he wasn't in favour of but re-electing your Member of Parliament seems a legitimate thing to do

PB The mandatory reselection of MPs...

GR Yes, and the third thing is controlling the manifesto and I still remember an exceptionally lying speech from Benn accusing Tony roughly saying Jim Callaghan had prevented all sorts of things going into the manifesto. And we were under great pressure, really. And my friends began to get shifty in the Summer of 1980 and they were beginning to feel desperate. They were older than me (Williams and Rodgers), I

was not attracted by their idea of moving out, leaving the Labour Party. I think it was partly because I was sentimental about the Labour Party, I joined it...it was a big move for me to join it in the first place, I wasn't hereditary. I thought it could be won round, it would take a long time – they didn't.

PB That's interesting because one of the questions I was going to ask was whether you were contemplated leaving and obviously you didn't...

GR Oddly enough I didn't. I did contemplate leaving politics altogether.

PB Yes because some people thought leaving full stop rather than defecting?

GR Yes, well it's mentioned in the index of Crewe and King, I think they explain the difference.

PB Roy Hattersley mentioned that there were some who he said felt so down and depressed about the situation and they were thinking of leaving politics altogether but that was different.

GR That was different, but I didn't feel, I wasn't attracted by my friends' alternative. At the bottom it was sentimental, romantic if you like...

PB It's a tribal loyalty?

GR Tribal loyalty *but* it was a tribal loyalty to a tribe that I wasn't born into, it was an intellectual commitment.

PB So you chose to go into the Labour Party itself?

GR Yes, I had a cousin who was the Secretary of the Fabians in the 30s but that was about it, my Grandfather was a Tory MP...

PB So there was nothing there to say that it was preordained?

GR No, it wasn't like Kinnock...it's his tribe, but it had become my tribe. But I also thought it wasn't a viable political project, theirs. I thought that it wouldn't work, I thought that the Labour Party would stop them, prevent them breaking through, enough of the Labour Party, which proved to be true. Though if we had all left then of course we wouldn't but I don't know. I suppose if we all left the Labour Party would have ended up like the French Communist Party. The Social Democrats would have been like the Socialists in France. But it didn't happen like that. I wasn't attracted to that and it was dreadful seeing them leaving. I remember trying to stop them leaving, I noted in my diary meeting with Shirley, in either late 80 or early 81 and Shirley, me and her two other PPSs met for lunch. Bob Mitchell said no to her question 'can the Labour Party recover?' John Cartwright said probably not and I said yes but it would take time. And they both left in time to join the SDP. I haven't told you that the awfulness of the situation, two or three years of holding one's position. In a way my friends were leaving and I was being attacked in my constituency by as traitor, 'you're bound to leave soon.' It was the Trots, it was a terrible time, I felt like Marshall Ney fighting a rear-guard action!

PB So you were fighting a rear-guard action in your Constituency Labour Party at the time a lot of many members were. Roy Hattersley again wasn't very sympathetic. You felt that pressure as you said for two years and it was a lot of late meetings from what I have read...

GR The old ladies came for me for the GMCs, the Trots said some horrible things, I was deliberately targeted by the Rank and File Mobilising Committee, they were the Trots, I was a well-known moderate and they wanted to deselect me, it was as simple as that and I knew that, my friends knew that. And I always had a majority except once, a

majority usually of 2:1 and they were terrific meetings of about 150 people! My wife used to kick me under the table to try and egg me on.

PB It must have been quite intimidating?

GR Yeah, well I had to give leadership, basically.

PB I think people forget that, you are selected by the party and are beholden to the party but you are the leader.

GR My friends loved me bashing the Trots! I used to take them apart intellectually. I said you are entryists, what you are trying to do is take over this bloody party which is a well-known Trotskyite...which indeed it was. And eventually they were kicked out, it did take a bit of time. The ever-lasting debt to the Labour Party to Neil is getting rid of the Trots.

PB It had to come from someone on a position on the left?

GR I think it was much easier coming from the left but...I'm sad that he failed to win the election for us but he wasn't very good at fighting elections, really. He didn't look like a leader but I am always grateful for him making the Labour Party a decent party to belong to again. I mean it was a reign of terror basically for those of us. One of the reasons why Healey didn't get the leadership was because there were about thirty people whose will buckled and though their heads...they voted for a quiet life and voted for Michael Foot even though they didn't think he was much good.

PB Do you think do you think that if Healey had been more clubbable he would have won?

GR I think that Healey fought very badly, he could have been leader of the party. I think Callaghan ought to have gone straight away when we lost in 1979, I think it was disgraceful that he didn't. I think Healey (quotes from his book *Friends and Rivals*), I'll

read this paragraph: 'Healey leaves us with one of the great might have beens of Labour Party history. It would certainly have prevented an SDP breakaway', I don't think they could have broken away. 'Even if Mrs Thatcher had still won in 1983 it would have been by a much narrower margin, leaving Labour well-placed to both modernise itself and then to stage a political comeback at least one, if not two election points before it finally took 1997 place in 1997'. Maybe that's being too optimistic there I think that's probably right. 'Yet Healey, because of his poor tactics following Labour's defeat in 1979 keeping his down, and especially after Bishop's Stortford when he basically ought to have said 'now look here, we can't have this', he didn't provide leadership and therefore must share some of the blame for Michael Foot's victory and the SDP breakaway'. I mean he totally underestimated the chance of Shirley and Bill and David Owen going, to them he was terribly complacent.

PB There seems to be a running theme with regards to Healey in as much of the fact that he said to those who were thinking of defecting 'you have nowhere else to go' and someone sent him a postcard back saying 'found somewhere else to go', which is quite a riposte.

GR It's partly complacency and remember he didn't quite have Jim Callaghan's ability to appeal to the centre ground, he wasn't quite of the centre ground, really. He was a tough old social democrat stroke right winger in a way in spite of being a real intellectual which Jim Callaghan wasn't. But he realised he had to appeal to the Callaghan constituency who included some people who probably in the end voted for Michael Foot so he didn't want to make too much of a row for fear frightening them off, so you can see his dilemma.

- PB The one thing Healey was really remembered for was winning the Deputy Leadership. Reading Dianne Hayter's book *Fightback!* It was down to the St Ermin's Group and the Labour Solidarity campaign
- GR And indeed me, I was virtually his campaign manager, he didn't appoint anyone I had to appoint myself! I wanted the Labour Party to survive and the fact that Healey was a rotten organiser. He was perfectly willing to go to all these meetings and stand up for himself and he had to be quite brave really, there was a lot of intimidation and shouting which Benn did nothing to stop. The reason all of us don't think he was a nice, sweet clubbable little fellow as he now goes around is because of this period when he went around like a little fascist.
- PB The narrowness of the victory...
- GR In reality it wasn't narrow because the T&G cheated. I mean the T&G...the fact is that they had a consultation which came out overwhelmingly for Healey at the area level which they chose to ignore. They chose to vote for Silkin and in the second ballot voted for Benn.
- PB Which was against the union members' wishes...
- GR Well it was, basically. NUPE had a consultation which they obeyed. The T&G ignored theirs.
- PB That's one of things that came out of the St Ermin's Group, after the Special Wembley Conference, with the Limehouse Declaration, it was almost the next day, wasn't it, the St Ermin's Group formed the moderate trade union leaders and they realised that the representatives at Conference and on the NEC were manipulating things. Without St Ermins and without your group –

GR We wouldn't have done it.

PB Which is why you were convinced, you wrote in your diary that night, 'we have saved the Labour Party tonight', because it would have been thirty or forty MPs who would have defected.

GR I think that if Healey had lost it would have been difficult to bring it back, it may have taken two or three more elections than it did. I mean we eventually got rid of Benn because he would have lost catastrophically.

PB And he lost his seat, didn't he, he lost Bristol...

GR Well, yes he lost his seat. And I have to say he then went to Chesterfield which when he left turned Liberal.

PB Which only just turned Labour again at the last election.

GR Yes, that's outrageous. Funnily enough I don't think he was a good constituency MP. And he was getting on.

PB It's interesting looking back and you said it was long hard slog, it was a battle but do you think after the Special Conference and after the Wembley Conference and after the election of Healey, do you think with the SDP having left and the slow, slow battle against the Militant Tendency, do you think that was the beginning of the drawing of the blood and the removal of the extremes on both sides?

GR Yes but...Shirley was one of the most popular members of the party, she wasn't extreme it was a minus for us when she left.

PB You might say Neville Sanderson might have been...

GR Well there were one or two. I don't buy that actually, these were vote getters, the brightest of their generation, it was very damaging for us whereas those guys in Militant were vote losers.

PB Denis Healey said the creation of the SDP caused a decade of Thatcherism...

GR That's not quite right, the SDP...no. He got something slightly wrong, when Roy Jenkins died, Healey made...('the only critical note' this was when Jenkins died 'came from his former colleague and rival Denis Healey. Healey praised Jenkins's civilising influence as a reforming Home Secretary but argued that setting up the SDP was really very unfortunate "as it made it difficult for me and less likely for me to become leader and made it possible for Margaret Thatcher to win the 1983 election." This was a re-writing of history', this was me, 'Healey had already been defeated for his Labour leadership by Foot before the creation of the SDP in March 1981. Indeed Healey's defeat was probably to be the deciding factor that led to the SDP split'. So he slightly got it wrong. 'As for Thatcher's 1983 victory the formation SDP in Alliance with the Liberals undoubtedly increased the Conservative majority but it's difficult to see how a Labour Party led by Michael Foot or any unreformed Labour Party could have won an election in the 1980s.' So I think we did have to reform ourselves.

PB There was also the external factors such as the Falklands issue that certainly did play a part in 1983 as there was a time when Mrs Thatcher's Government was deeply unpopular.

GR It was. So that was a slight re-writing of history. We were in bad shape. We needed to be reformed, we needed a revisionist change. Funnily enough I found the constitutional agenda quite useful in the end when we got it to one member one vote in the end. I think we didn't go far enough with the unions. I prefer them not to be in the party, I like unions, I'd prefer it if we were like the continental socialist parties where the unions

don't have a constitutional role in the party. I mean I thought it was unfortunate that Ed Miliband owes his victory to the union vote. It's true that union vote has been improved by the fact it's meant to be on the basis of one member one vote but sometimes...but we can always be beaten with it. The trouble is I rather like the union money and I can't think of any other way to finance the party. I mean that's something for the future, we won the 97 election without, we'd reduced the influence of the unions and party membership had gone up, it hasn't now, I'm not sure what it is now.

PB Going back to the Solidarity Group, it was quite a disparate grouping of MPs, you got Frank Field and Peter Shore who were seen as being anti-European sentiments compared to yourself and Roy Hattersley. Were there difficulties at times?

GR Not much, it wasn't about policy really, it was basically the sensible guys got together irrespective of our views on certain policies, we had to get together or we'd be slaughtered.

PB So it was coalescing around the greater sense of what was required?

GR That's very well put, hang on to that!

PB There's just one other thing which comes from *'Friends and Rivals'* regarding the Limehouse Declaration where you said that it was 'an unexceptional revisionist document,' that would appeal to 'nearly all German Social Democrats, most Labour right-wingers of the time and indeed the vast majority of Tony Blair's New Labour Party.' Looking back, do you think that the New Labour came about as a result of the SDP, as contended by David Owen, or do you view New Labour as a separate development?

GR Not quite like that, it's more complex, I think it came, if I wanted to give anyone the credit other than Tony Blair I would probably give it to Mrs Thatcher and John Major,

the successive defeats of the Labour Party, as there's nothing like four defeats to get you to think yourself through as to what you should be doing.

Appendix Eleven

Interview with the Right Honourable the Lord Clive Soley of Hammersmith PC,

18 November 2014

PB The first question is what your own recollections of what the mood of the party was like at the time in 1979?

CS It was grim, in a word. When I came in here in nineteen seventy nine the mood in the Parliamentary Labour Party was really almost desolate, they were demoralised, they were divided, they were battered and shattered because I remember they hardly had a majority at all so the last year or two that Government had been really tiring. And I remember remarking publicly somewhere or other that sitting in that tea room with Labour MPs was like sitting in a Battle of Britain crew room after a particularly bad sortie because they would all be talking about who didn't come back, because so many people defected and I think there were only ten or eleven of us who were new members of the parliamentary Labour party and many of them were in seats where people had stood down.

PB And what was the first conference, the September 1979 Conference like, I understand that it was quite a bitter experience?

CS Yes it was. That one and several following it which were very bitter and there was a mood in which MPs felt vilified.

PB Denis Healey contends that it was the 1980 Special Conference and the Bishop's Stortford Commission of Inquiry was the chrysalis for the SDP creation.

CS I think the 1980 Special Conference was because it was this business of both taking away powers from the PLP combined with the growing arguments for withdrawal from

Europe and defending the nuclear deterrent which set David Owen and Shirley Williams and others to form a growing alliance which was heading to the exit.

PB Why do you think in 1981 the defections came about, why not earlier like in the Seventies?

CS I do think they made a pretty conscious decision that they needed to sit down and talk about how they were going to get their new party airborne and they came to a conclusion that the best way of doing that was to have a period over time where member after member of the parliamentary labour party withdrew from the Labour party and joined the SDP because that way you wore down an already worn down parliamentary Labour Party and you would need to confirm that but that was my reading of their tactics.

PB So it's been contended that it needed someone from the left of the party to lead the Labour party in the early nineteen eighties hence the reason for Michael Foot's election. Do you think it needed someone like Michael Foot at the time or do you think if Denis Healey had been in charge it would have been radically different.

CS I think if Denis had led the party our chances of reviving the public fortune would have gone up but the divisions in the party probably would have got deeper, we were in this impossible position where the public wanted Denis but the party wanted Michael or better still Tony Benn, because Michael was a bridge to walk over actually. But I think if Denis had got it well it would have been pretty bloody and pretty bruising. It's just possible the party might have recovered and pulled itself together but it's very hard to know.

PB And considering the eventual position in the party towards the centre by Neil Kinnock throughout the Eighties, do you think this was part of a corrective process where the

extremists if you will, like the extremists on the right and the militant left, were being purged, do you think it was part of the corrective process that needed to happen in the party?

CS Yes, the party was deeply split and as with all deep splits in any political party and indeed any organization and the battle for control and the battle surge is backwards and forwards that's what was happening one minute you thought that the left was winning and next minute you thought that the right was winning. But it's very much like that now I remember one man telling people are you with us now, he was someone who went to the SDP and when I answered no he said oh well we know you will be with us in the long run. So in a way those were the conversations that were happening from time to time.

PB Do you think that the SDP with its initial leadership was with Roy Jenkins so it was an association more shall we say the Liberal legislation that it was associated with in the 1960s? With the SDP being formed and everything was there ever a fear that that social Liberal wing of the Labour party had been weakened by them leaving?

CS Well it was weakened by them leaving there was no doubt about that but I think the reason was much more about the commitment by Jenkins and others to the common market as it was then and to the nuclear weapons programme. It was those two issues which presented the people with the SDP as right wingers and that enabled the left wingers in the Labour party to present them as right wingers. I remember in my own party which came very much from the side of the left saying they probably dub the SDP as the salads...and you know the argument was they were weak washy Liberals but not about the liberal small 'l' liberal policies more about Europe and nuclear weapons.

PB Giles Radice as contended the Lime house Declaration , what's the quotation, 'would appeal to nearly all German Social Democrats , most Labour right wingers of the time

and the vast majority of Tony Blair's new labour Party'. Do you think new Labour came about as a result of the SDP or do you think new Labour was an entirely different?

CS No, I do think it came out by that process it was as I said when parties get divided lines its very rarely resolved quickly and the tragedy of my generation is we were in opposition for eighteen years precisely cause you couldn't solve it quickly and the Tory party had the same problem after nineteen ninety seven. It took them only eleven years that's a long time and I do think parties get into such states when the divisions are very deep and real. The Labour party now is very united despite arguments about Ed Miliband's leadership. The party as a party is united in a way that it wasn't in the nineteen seventies, eighties. And similarly you say the same for the Tory party in the late 1990S, early 2000.

PB Obviously it was obvious there was much bitterness and rancour with the defections that took place not just from the left of the party but also from those who considered themselves to be from the right people like Roy Hattersley and such forth and everything. Because of this do you think there is ever any chance of there being some sort of rapprochement, some reconciliation between those who defected and those who came back. I know there was some within the Lords for example who left and came back in the late eighties early nineties and David Owen who has since become and independent Social Democrat who has aligned almost with the Labour party again. Do you think there might be that where some of them might actually consider to come back again?

CS If you had been there Tony Blair deliberately brought them back, Andrew Adonis, for example, was in his office. And a number of them who joined the SDLP and by the time before Tony they fought over the leadership there was a willingness to take people back because we had dealt with the militant bit. What was happening in a way

particularly with militants was managing to brand anyone who sounded like they wanted to build bridges as someone who was a potential betrayer. You had this as Neil Kinnock pointed out anyone who was not on his side was a betrayer and he was quite right. That was actually used by militants and others on betraying the cause and it's a classic case I think where all the ideologies whether they are political or religious for that matter do tend to divide and the division becomes very, very bitter and very hard to recover from. As long as you have an election to win and then the electorate do it for you. And that make you, enables you to recover. If we don't have elections we just split and fight and you can see that in religious organisations and at other times in political organisations, because they have an ideology if you are being elected all the time when you get a good kicking it makes you sit down and think how do we recover.

PB Well absolutely and that's the thing about the Labour party as well because it does not have a fixed ideology as such does it there are so many different strands of thinking.

CS But some of them tried to make it happen they had a clear ideology they clearly had in their minds eye an ideology, the problem was that a) the majority of the party didn't fully understand it and b) they didn't like it! But they were very well organised, it wasn't just militant, it was people who hung on to militant, people like me weren't clear enough in our opposition, if we had been clearer and more out spoken at an earlier stage and more organised actually we might have been better. Part of the problem was that the right wing wasn't attractive either. I replaced an MP who was the last member of the PLP who was in favour of hanging who had a prison in his constituency and didn't take letters from prisoners , he would often come out with anti-immigrant statements which didn't go down well in places like Hammersmith. I find it very difficult to try to help him. The party had to deselect before they could select, I literally tried to talk to him but he wouldn't talk to me. Even if you were trying to get some sort of agreement you had not got a cat in hell's chance actually. I for one was thinking to myself what have I let

myself in for. Why don't I go and do something else. I think it was the historian Peter Hennessey in here who described people like myself us as the lost generation.

Appendix Twelve

Interview conducted with the Right Honourable Baroness Williams of Crosby

27th April 2004

PB Lady Williams, thank you for agreeing to this interview. The dissertation in which I am writing about is regarding the difficulties faced by the Labour Party in the 1970's in relation to membership of the European Community. What are your recollections of the party's opinion at large with regard to membership around the time of the European Communities Bill in 1971?

SW The Party was deeply split. The referendum was held by Harold Wilson to hold the party together. For Harold Wilson that was always the major priority, not just on Europe but on every issue that came up. What most mattered to him was to be able to say, 'I've held this party together.' So, in the run-up to the referendum, indeed the whole period from the loss of the election in 1970, all the way through to the referendum in 1975, there were huge differences within the party. There was one group which was led by Roy Jenkins, which I was certainly part of. There was another group led by Tony Benn, which Eric Varley and many other members of the left were part of. Essentially, it was about whether we should stay within the European Community or not. Finally Harold, in a desperate attempt both to hold the party together and to effectively stop the divisions and struggles that were splitting the party further and further apart, agreed to Tony Benn's proposals for a referendum. Tony, I think, clearly expected a referendum to be unfavourable, to go for a 'No' vote, because all the polls showed that the opposition to the European Community was roughly two to one against, and he (Wilson) was rather reluctant to concede but eventually he did, and the referendum

campaign emerged out of that, with people of all parties on the 'Yes' and 'No' campaigns.

PB What were your recollections of the campaign itself, the referendum campaign?

SW I think it was brilliant. There were two things, I think that characterised it, one was that for the first time, in effect party loyalties were set aside for the purposes and for the period of the referendum and they were actually held up remarkably well. I think it was the first time that the Cabinet was allowed to abandon collective responsibility for separate positions and it came together after the referendum really very easily and very well without that leaving a lasting scar. The other thing that then led to two major all-party campaigns, both 'Yes' and 'No' because the Government of the day was not prepared to exercise party loyalty and so at that point the Conservatives and the Liberals both step into line in the same way. So the entire campaign was fought on a non-partisan basis.

PB In your opinion do you think the referendum helped to soothe the divisions within the Labour Party, in the short term at any rate?

SW Yes, in the short term it did. They were there and they popped up again after the 1979 General Election was lost, but they did largely manage to hold it at bay through the period of the Labour Government of 1975 to 1979.

PB And do you think that Harold Wilson deserves some credit for going ahead and holding the referendum?

SW Yes, I do. I mean he actually played a very small part in the referendum campaign itself, people forget that. He left the larger part of the campaigning to his colleagues. It

wasn't clear until the very end where he stood I don't think! So it wasn't that his role in the campaign was terribly important, but the roles of Ted Heath and Roy Jenkins and so on were much more important. It was more about his handling of the issue within the party that's very successful.

I've a couple more things that might be helpful to you? One was that both sides worked very to get trade union support, and the trade unions actually tended too, were themselves divided. You had some trade unions like the NUGMW who were strongly pro-Europe. You have others like the T and G that were strongly against, a great deal depended on the leaders and very often they actually reflected the opinion of a particular leader of the union. So the unions were not as one, they are now much more pro-European as a whole then they were then. The business community tended on the whole to be pro-European, I think more then than they are now. So most of the major business people, the big business people tended to support the 'Yes' campaign but often the small business tended to support the 'No' campaign.

PB It's interesting to see that the newspapers at the time were almost unanimous in supporting the 'Yes' campaign.

SW The newspapers were mostly, I think there were one or two that were against...

PB The Morning Star, I think was one of the exceptions wasn't it?

SW I'm not sure about the Mail. Most of the major, certainly the broadsheets were in favour. I think you need to look at the Telegraph and the Mail, I'm not sure about them, because the Telegraph tended to be rather favourable to Enoch Powell. But if you were to look at the newspaper headlines, I think you'll find that the Telegraph was really willing to both support Conservative pro- and Conservative-anti.

PB So it was really taking the Conservative line in general?

SW Yes, I mean they took articles from both sides, I think they made comments on both sides, I think they were quite careful to position themselves so that they were not one hundred percent one way or another.

PB Lady Williams, thank you very much for your time.

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